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DUNCAN CAUGHT AND HELD DAMARIS' HAND, AND FOR A MOMENT THEY GLARED LIKE WILD CREATURES INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES!

FORTUNES OF DAMARIS.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"It is certainly most annoying that Sir Armitage Vyse should have left his daughter to my care; he will pay generously, but that is not the main point. Until you two girls are settled, I would prefer to have no other girl in the household. It is really too thoughtless. Of course, Lady Vyse was my own cousin, but we rarely corresponded at any time, and after her marriage I lost all sight of her, and her daughter is an utter stranger to me."

Mrs. Redgrave spoke in an offended tone; she was not gifted by nature with an amiable disposition, and her religion, she was a Particular Baptist, had only increased her in-born acerbity. It was too bad that Sir Armitage should take it for granted she would

accept his daughter as her guest during his enforced absence in India for twelve long months. The girl had been brought up principally abroad, and, for aught Mrs. Redgrave knew, might have Catholic ideas, and prove a regular firebrand in the little dissenting town of Slowcum, where everybody knew everybody's business, and one might enumerate the church-going families upon one's hands. Mrs. Redgrave was a power in the place, and was not wishful to lose her prestige for the sake of a stranger; not even the fact that she was an ambassador's daughter quite reconciled her to the inevitable invasion. Tossing the letter towards her eldest daughter, she said, "Read for yourself, Rachel. I really cannot see any escape for us," and Miss Redgrave, nothing loathe, read the short epistle for her own and Leah's benefit:

"Dear Mrs. Redgrave,—It will surprise you not a little, I suppose, to receive such a communication from me as this; but, by the stress of circumstances, I am compelled to ask your charity. My daughter (your cousin's child)

is leaving school to-day, and I, unfortunately, am ordered to Madras early next week. I cannot take her with me, for my physician assures me the climate would be fatal to her (she is not particularly robust), and I know of no other lady with whom I could leave her for the ensuing twelve months. I have no friends—rather, I should say, no relatives—and I believe Lady Vyse had none but yourself, so I make bold to ask your charity.

"I will defray all expenses incurred, and beg you as an earnest of my wish to accept the enclosed"—the enclosed was a cheque for one hundred pounds. "Do not trouble to reply; your letter would probably arrive here too late; and believing that you will freely accept the charge, I shall send Damaris on by the next packet. You will find her as docile as she is pretty, and as good as she is accomplished.

"With kindest regards to yourself and family, "I remain, dear madam,

"Yours faithfully,

"ARMITAGE VYSE."

"I consider Sir Armitage has taken an unwarrantable liberty," snapped Rachel. "And what an outlandish name the girl has—'Damaris'; it is positively heathenish. Was Lady Vyse blessed with one equally outrageous?"

"No; she was named Ruth."

"Has she been long dead?" broke in Leah. "I never heard you speak of her before."

"Oh, she died years ago," answered Mrs. Redgrave, hurriedly. "I don't suppose Damaris remembers her in the least. Well, girls, we have no choice in the matter; we cannot cast her adrift, that would be unchristian treatment, and really Sir Armitage's cheque is very welcome."

"I wonder what Mr. Campbell will say to this arrangement," sighed Rachel, "he so detests anything frivolous in a woman, and Damaris Vyse is certain to have imbibed some of the queer French notions; he will look upon her as a heretic."

"A fig for Mr. Campbell's opinion," said Leah, with a toss of her head, "we cannot be blind to our own interests for his sake; and we are not all infatuated with him."

Rachel flushed huskily. "I would not speak so disrespectfully of our pastor were I you," she answered; "and if we lost prestige in our own set, not all Sir Armitage Vyse's cheques could restore it."

"They will help to largely," sneered the other, "we are not so religious that we despise money—mamma, I think it an awful shame papa should have left us so slenderly provided for, whilst Jocelyn has all his heart desired."

"This money was inherited from his mother, Leah—you forget I was only your father's second wife, and his fortune was a small one. He did his best for us, and really Jocelyn is not ungenerous."

"Still, he might do a great deal more for us than he does," said Leah, "his profession alone must bring him in a good round sum annually, and then he could introduce us to people who are worth knowing. I wish you would sell the house and go up to town; he would be obliged to recognise us and—"

"You are talking foolishly," broke in Miss Redgrave, "and I am sorry that you hanker after worldly pleasures. Then, although our income is ample for our wants at Slowcum, it would be quite insufficient for London. I had rather be a power here, than a nobody in town. And now mamma, what room is Damaris Vyse to have?"

"Why, my dear, it would never do to put a slight upon her; she is a great heiress, and, of course, accustomed to every luxury. I thought that she could have yours, and you could share mine—"

"I decline the offer, you know I like privacy—"

"Oh, well," broke in Leah, who was not really ill-natured, although given to making sarcastic speeches, "I'll give up my room; it is nearly as good as Rachel's, and I'll take the middle chamber—it is small, but comfortable, and I don't wish to put you out of the way, mamma. Then, with a wicked glance at her sister, "I am not so enamoured with Duncan Campbell that I must needs pore over his sermons, week in and week out. What time does Damaris arrive?"

"I cannot tell either the hour or day, but I must have everything in readiness," scrambled the lady, "may I count on your help, Rachel?"

"Why, mamma, you forget that I am due at the Scripture Union at three thirty."

"Make my excuses for me," cried Leah, "tell them duty prevents me shedding the glory of my presence upon them," and she

ran lightly upstairs, followed slowly by Mrs. Redgrave, in whose side she was a continual thorn. She never could be quite sure how Leah would act, and the Slowcum people were censorious; then too, poor soul, she was anxious to see her daughters settled. Rachel was twenty-four, and looked thirty; Leah was only two years younger, and neither was pretty. They had drab hair and complexions, were angular in figure, and Rachel's eyes were of the lightest possible grey; Leah's face was redeemed from absolute plainness, however, by a pair of nice dark brown eyes, and her manner was more sprightly than her sisters. Jocelyn, her half brother, used to say that "bred in a different atmosphere Leah would really be a nice little body."

At five o'clock everything was in readiness for the guest, and Mrs. Redgrave sat down with a sigh to sip the fragrant tea which Leah had made, and to wonder over Miss Vyse, and her disposition. In the midst of her wondering a cab drove up to the door.

"Damaris!" said Leah, jumping up and running to the window. "Oh! what a heap of luggage! Mamma, you will go out to meet her, won't you? I should say she feels strange." And whilst Mrs. Redgrave hurried into the hall, Leah satisfied her curiosity by peeping behind the curtains at the new comer, who had now alighted. What she saw was a girl of medium height, slender and graceful; with a mass of golden brown hair, deep grey eyes, the loveliest complexion imaginable, and a riant face. She was daintily dressed in brown velvet, and she had the easy manner of one accustomed to riches and command. There was such an indescribable air of elegance and breeding about her, that Leah sighed enviously. Then she smiled as she thought how Duncan Campbell would inveigh against the pomps and vanities of this wicked world when he saw Damaris in his congregation the following morning.

Mrs. Redgrave greeted her young charge somewhat frigidly. "I regret that you had to travel from the station alone," she said, "but Sir Armitage gave us no hint as to the time of your arrival."

"That is just like papa," the girl answered, with an indulgent smile. "I do not know how he will get on at all without me."

"He managed to do so for several years, I believe."

Ah, yes; but now that I have been with him three months, he wonders that he could do so. Oh, his papers and things were in the oddest state of confusion, and I am at loss to know who will keep them in order, and remind him of his numerous engagements. I wanted to go out with him, but he would not allow that."

He was very wise. I understand that the moral tone of Anglo-Indian society is very lax. Come in now, and let me make you known to Leah."

Damaris, a little chilled by Mrs. Redgrave's manner, followed her into the adjoining room, Leah coming forward to meet her with the words:

"Aren't you tired? Won't you rest awhile before you take off your wraps, and let me give you some tea?" Then something in the young stranger's face moved her to most unwonted kindness. Stooping, she kissed Damaris on the cheek, and was startled to see the colour rush into the fair face, the grey eyes fill with tears.

"Thank you, Cousin Leah," the girl said, simply, "you are very kind to welcome me like this. I—I was feeling so lonely."

So the ice between them was broken, and Damaris did not feel so much snubbed by Rachel's frigidity as she would otherwise have done, for Rachel returned in a vexed mood,

Duncan having accompanied her most formidable rival home.

Sunday morning came, and Damaris, looking lovely in a wine-coloured velvet costume went downstairs, carrying her prayer-book. Mrs. Redgrave and Rachel exchanged glances.

"You will not need your book," said the former, "we do not approve a set form of prayer at our chapel."

Damaris looked blankly at her.

"Do you never go to church?"

"Nobody, who is anybody, does that at Slowcum," said Leah, flippantly.

"Leah!" cried her sister, rebukefully, "how can you answer Damaris so lightly? We do not attend church because we cannot approve the form of worship, or its ridiculous rites and ceremonies. I hope you will be edified by Mr. Campbell's prayers and sermon."

Damaris looked flushed and uneasy, but she made no remonstrance; only Leah saw that she was not well pleased. Covertly she watched her throughout the dreary service, and noted, with a little malicious thrill of satisfaction, that she was certainly not favourably impressed by Duncan. He had had the advantage of a university education, but the man's innate vulgarity would not be hidden. He was not ill-looking; but, as Damaris said afterwards to Leah, "No one could possibly mistake him for a gentleman"; and then he was so self-assertive, so narrow-minded, that the girl with her more generous mind and liberal education held him in contempt. As the sermon dragged out its weary length, her colour heightened, and something more than a tinge of hauteur crept over her face, as she realised she was the cynosure of all eyes; and when, as they walked home, Rachel said: "I hope that you are favourably impressed by what you have heard and seen, cousin," she answered, swiftly: "I never was so disgusted in my life! There was scarcely a well-bred person in the congregation; and the minister is a cad!"

Leah laughed; Mrs. Redgrave said austere, "My dear!" but Rachel remarked, icily:

"You are probably judging us by the people you have met abroad. I understand there is great license of manner allowed on the Continent, and I did not suppose that you would appreciate so good, so holy a man as Mr. Duncan Campbell."

Damaris looked gravely at her.

"I am sorry I cannot see with your eyes, Rachel," was all she said; and yet Miss Redgrave felt crushed, and began to regard the girl with active animosity.

In the evening, when they all stood dressed for walking, she quietly announced her intention of attending church, following up her remark by going out alone, and Mrs. Redgrave suffered torments as she walked to chapel.

Of course, the girl's absence would be matter for comment, and when it became known that she had formed one of the church congregation, she would be the subject for much rebuke from other members of the chapel. In her dilemma she spoke to Duncan, and he promised to interview Miss Vyse himself, on the following morning. But he "reckoned without his host"; Damaris absolutely refused to hear him, saying no man should be the keeper of her conscience, and that everybody had a perfect right to worship as he or she pleased.

So she continued to attend church; and this was her first sin against Slowcum, but by no means her last. As Mrs. Redgrave plaintively said: "She was a perfect firebrand in their midst, and was doing Leah incalculable harm."

Duncan committed himself to no opinion. Damaris was pretty; she would be rich; and he loved money for money's sake.

CHAPTER II.

Damaris, with her skirts lifted just above her ankles, was initiating Leah into the mysteries of the waltz, singing softly all the while:

"Oh, love for a week, a year, a day,
But, alas! for the love that loves away."

Suddenly, the door opened, and Duncan, who had the run of the house, entered. The habits of so many years were too strong for Leah, and she fled shamefacedly; but Damaris faced the enemy with bright eyes and flushed cheeks.

"Why did not you knock?" she demanded, haughtily.

"It would have been useless; I should not have been heard above your singing."

"You might, at least, have made the attempt," remarked the young lady, sinking down upon a couch. "I hate surprises."

"It appears that you hate all I say or do, Miss Vyse. Why is it? There is no one in Slocum who is so truly your friend as I, so anxious for your welfare, so eager to save you from yourself and your besetting sins. Naturally you have a heart of gold, but you are allowing the weeds to spring up in the good soil, your thoughts turn fondly to the vanities of this world."

Damaris was a little inclined to be angry; then the funny side of the affair presented itself to her, and a spirit of mischief possessed her. With her eyes meekly cast down, she said, demurely:

"Would it not be well to give me a written list of my delinquencies; it would be easier for me to remember them, and, by remembering, end them."

My dear young lady, you must not think me unduly harsh," Duncan said, withunction. "I have no doubt that your faults are only due to your training; all you need is a true friend and guide. You will believe that I am earnest when I say, I desire nothing so much as to supply that necessity."

She almost laughed aloud, for Damaris was not at all a "groody" young lady; but she answered, demurely:

"You are very kind, Mr. Campbell, to take such an interest in such an utter stranger as myself."

"Oh, not a stranger, dear Miss Vyse, just a lamb outside the fold," and he contrived to possess himself of one slender hand.

She hastily disengaged herself from his hold, but not before Rachel, passing the half open door, had been witness to the scene. She rushed to her own room, there to give vent to her passion in a wild outburst of tears, and then, as she heard voices approaching, she rose and went hurriedly to the door. It was Leah who was speaking:

"Oh, Damaris; will he tell mamma? What did he say?"

"He talked a great deal of nonsense; and," added Miss Vyse, with a merry laugh, "at the end, I was compelled to snub him."

Rachel burst out upon them.

"You shameless, wicked girl!" she cried, carried beyond herself by her jealous anger, "how dare you make sport of a man whose hand you are not worthy to touch? How dare you come here to destroy our peace? I—I saw you—he was holding your hand. You were not angry; and—and you are trying to take him from me."

Damaris stood like one confounded; her cheeks had grown pale and her lips quivered. She was angry and ashamed; but Leah, who was fast developing into a young woman of spirit, said:

"Don't notice, Ray. Delicacy isn't her most striking virtue. She is disgustingly fond of Duncan Campbell, and she makes no secret of it. As she says, she is afraid you are taking him away from her."

"I am sorry," said Damaris, coldly, "if

I have pained you. I think I may promise you never to transgress in like manner again."

And then she went away with the dignity which poor, jealous Rachel so often envied, and so vainly tried to emulate.

It did not please Duncan to find that from to-day Damaris avoided him; and, being unaccustomed to coldness from any of the marriageable girls of Slocum, he was piqued into seeking her society on every available occasion. So much as in him lay to love, he loved Damaris Vyse, and having a very comfortable opinion of his own merits, was not at all hopeless of winning her. Perhaps he liked her all the more for being a little hard to win; and certainly he had no ruth upon Rachel, although, until Damaris came, he had seriously meditated marriage with her, because her fortune, if slender, would still make a pleasant addition to his own income, and she had influential friends.

So matters stood, when, returning one day from a solitary walk, Damaris was pounced upon by Leah.

"Oh! what a long time you have been away; and I dying all the while to tell you the news. Jocelyn has come—my brother, you know—and I want you to like him. He is a splendid fellow; there isn't a man in Slocum fit to hold a candle to him."

"I thought," said Damaris, with a wicked smile, "that you were not at all enamoured of Mr. Jocelyn Redgrave."

"That is too bad of you," Leah answered, laughing and blushing. "I know I used to say nasty, spiteful things of him when you first came, but I don't now, and I never really meant them; I was only jealous of his superior fortune and his pleasant ways. Come and be introduced—and oh! Damaris, Rachel is so angry because he says I have vastly improved since he was last here."

With that she dragged the girl into the drawing-room. To tell the truth, Miss Vyse was not at all anxious to meet Jocelyn, and was agreeably surprised when, from the depths of an easy-chair, a gentleman, tall and distinguished, rose to greet her, with a pleasant smile in his dark eyes and on his handsome face.

"You scarcely seem like a stranger," he said, "I have heard so much of you from Leah. And how does Slocum impress you?"

"It is—just a little dull," Damaris ventured, unwilling to hurt her hostess's feelings, "but I am getting used to it."

"Damaris means that she takes no interest in any of our pursuits," Rachel remarked, sourly. "She attends church, it is true, but she positively refuses to work in the vineyard."

The girl laughed.

"I am utterly unsuited for anything of the kind," she said, good-temperedly; "I know my own failings, and am not wishful to expose them—and, I honestly confess, I am not an industrious person."

"Damaris thinks her mission is to be ornamental."

"Really, Rachel, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" cried Leah, "and as there is no possible chance of rivalry between you on that score, you might curb your tongue a little."

Rachel flushed dusky. She was only too painfully aware of her own lack of good looks; and a wordy war would have ensued, but Jocelyn, who detested scenes, came to the rescue by asking the three girls to accompany him to a picturesque village lying two miles distant. The sisters declined, each having some duty to perform, but Damaris said she would like the walk, that she was not tired in the least; so she set out with Jocelyn, a little shyly, it is true, but quite prepared

to enjoy the brief journey and her companion's society.

Jocelyn talked well and pleasantly on all the most interesting topics of the day, and it seemed to his listener that he brought back a breath of the old pleasant, wider life with his words. They were fast becoming friends, when he suddenly paused; then he said, with his cheery smile:

"But I am monopolising all the conversation; suppose that by way of a change you tell me something of yourself."

"Oh! there is really nothing to tell; I lived at school until a few months ago—at first at Heidelberg, then at Provence. After I was seventeen papa brought me away, and we travelled about until he was ordered out to India."

"And you have positively no other living relative besides your father and my step-mother? You lost your own mother very early, I believe?" with a sympathetic look.

"Yes, dad is all I have!" Then she added hastily, "and the Slocum people. My mother I do not remember at all; I was only two years old when she died. One day after I went to live with papa I chanced upon an old portrait of her, and was so delighted with my find that I carried it to him, and asked him to tell me something about her; but he was so distressed I have never ventured to return to the subject. He loved her very dearly, I suppose, and he lost her when she was still young and beautiful. I have often wished that I could recall just how she looked and spoke; it is so hard to have no faintest remembrance of her. I might have been so different had she lived."

"Why should you wish to be other than you are?" he asked, smiling down upon her. "Don't you even guess what a beneficial influence you have over Leah? She is not a bad little soul in the main."

"She is very good to me."

"And Duncan Campbell, is he as often at Mrs. Redgrave's as he used to be? Does he make any progress in his wooing?"

To his surprise Damaris stammered and hesitated in her reply, and her face grew crimson, as she remembered many a bitter accusation brought against her by Rachel, and the persistency with which Duncan devoted himself to her.

"I—I—really, you should ask these questions of Mrs. Redgrave," she said, "she can answer them more satisfactorily than I."

"I am properly rebuked; I ought not to have tried to force your confidence; but really I thought everything would have been settled definitely for Rachel long ago. We were never good friends, but she deserves a better fellow than Campbell. Still, if she is satisfied—"

"In what way do you mean better?" asked Damaris, slyly. "I thought Mr. Campbell was a latter-day saint."

"He's in awful prig; and I think he wants Rachel just for the little dowry she will have. As regards his position, I have nothing against that, because I myself would marry the woman I loved, however poor and humble she might be, provided her ancestors could show a clean slate."

"And if not you would punish her for their faults?"

"Put it so, if you will. I should be afraid that she might inherit some of her peccadilloes, and transmit them to her children."

"That is a nice charitable conclusion to arrive at," Damaris said, scornfully, "it is really worthy of Slocum, Mr. Redgrave."

"Don't you think," he asked, whilst laughter dwelt in his eyes, "don't you think it would be nice and cousinly thing to call me Jocelyn?"

"You are not my cousin," wiffully; "and I have already shocked the good people here

sufficiently. I must not put their patience to the test again."

"But do you forbid me to call you Damaris? Miss Vyse is formal."

"I dare not give consent until we have consulted Mrs. Grundy."

"Oh, bother Mrs. Grundy! I would rather have your unblinded opinion."

But the young lady refused to state it, and, in fact, became so wilful, so distractingly tormenting, that Jocelyn declared himself helpless and hopeless.

"You wild little thing," he said, as she paused, breathless after much laughter, "if you were my sister I would punish you as you deserve."

"But, being neither your sister nor cousin, I laugh at your menaces."

"And you shall live to repent your insolent defiance," he retorted.

After this their jaunts were very frequent, to the manifest chagrin of Duncan.

"One never has a chance to speak alone with you now," he said one morning, when he happened upon Damaris in the hall, "that fellow Redgrave monopolises all your time and attention; it is not fair to me, your oldest friend."

Miss Vyse lifted her head very high, and her grey eyes flashed.

"I have yet to learn that you are that," she said, coolly. "You scarcely seem to realize the distinction between the two words 'acquaintance' and 'friend.'"

And she passed by with lurking laughter in her eyes; whilst Duncan almost cursed her in his heart for a coquette. Between him and Jocelyn there was antagonism, none the less deep and real because it was unspoken. Duncan accused him of winning Damaris away, whilst Jocelyn honestly and fervently despised Campbell as a hypocrite and time server.

So matters stood when Christmas Eve came. Damaris had been asked by the doctor's wife, little Mrs. Gillings, to assist in the decoration of the church, but had refused, fearing to cause some unpleasantness for Mrs. Redgrave amongst her friends.

At the last moment, however, Jocelyn over-ruled her decision.

"You are foolish," he said, "to yield an inch of ground to these worthies; they will ask for an ell on the next occasion. I shall take you down to the church myself."

And as no one dared dispute his word or question his actions, he carried the day, and conveyed his charge to church, where a pleasant evening was spent by all. Jocelyn was in great demand, and Damaris felt a great thrill of pride as she compared him with the other men present. He was so strong and big, so magnificent in his manhood, and yet so chivalrously gentle towards herself. The hot blood mounted to her face as his fingers touched hers in accepting wreaths and garlands with which to decorate the massive pillars of the beautiful old church. And a great, yet fluttering joy took possession of her, as his dark eyes looked into hers with something that was warmer than friendship in their honest depths.

They left early; Jocelyn saying "they had done their share, and he wanted a quiet walk home with her, as he had some news for her."

So together they passed out into the starlit stillness of the winter night.

CHAPTER III.

"I expect," he said, "that I shall be in great disgrace at home. I have known since this morning that I must leave here by to-night's mail; but to avoid much questioning I did

not mention the fact. I shall spend my Christmas in town."

All the light and glory seemed suddenly to die out of the girl's life, as she murmured: "Mrs. Redgrave will be grieved."

"Oh, I am not indispensable by any means; but you, Damaris, will you miss me just a little? won't you be just a wee bit sorry to think of the pleasure I am losing?"

"Why should I be?" she cried, with a fine assumption of cheerfulness. "If you are leaving bright scenes, you go to others that are brighter, and you are master of your own actions."

She was far too proud to show how much she was hurt by his seeming indifference. He put one strong yet gentle hand upon her shoulder, and, twisting her round, looked steadily into her eyes.

"Don't you know that you are a trifle unjust to me? I would not leave you for any call but duty's. A dear friend of mine is very ill—I fear in poverty—and has begged me to go to him. He has a wife and four small children wholly dependent upon him. I shall spend my Christmas Day with them."

Damaris flushed, hesitated, then shyly drawing out her purse said:

"Take it, please, and buy goodies and toys for the little ones. I have more than enough for my needs."

"Thank you," he answered, with equal frankness; "you are giving more pleasure than you can guess. I shall tell my small friends that the prettiest fairy of my acquaintance provided their feast for them."

No answer from the girl. She was thinking blankly what she should do with her days when Jocelyn was gone; for all at once there had come to her knowledge that she loved him with all the fervour of her young heart, and the fear was with her that she loved in vain.

"Why are you so quiet?" Jocelyn asked. "Are you tired? Does it bore you to hear me speak of myself and my pursuits?"

"No—oh, no! I like to listen. Shall you be long away?"

He glanced keenly at her.

"That depends upon circumstances. If they are favourable, I shall return on New Year's Eve. The thirtieth will find me knee deep in engagements which I would not shrink for worlds. I could not hear patiently Mrs. Redgrave's reproaches and entreaties, if she knew the main object of my visit to town, and so I have spoken of it to none until now. The very best and saintliest woman I know is the Superior of a Protestant Sisterhood—you are aware how harshly she would be judged here. The object of the Sisterhood is to rescue all waifs and strays; to help the fallen, and to assist a certain number of children to free education, and at least one substantial meal a day. The funds are unfortunately low at present, and so a series of entertainments has been organised for the thirtieth, at which your humble servant is to assist."

"It seems to me," said Damaris, "that you spend your life in working for others; you make me ashamed of myself. And what is the good Sister's name? Is she young—and pretty?"

"She is no longer young, but she is still very beautiful, and has seen much sorrow. They call her Sister Sarah; but in her old life she confesses she was known by another name. And now I think I have told you quite enough of myself—how do you intend spending your Christmas?"

"Oh, I don't know," with a dreary intonation. "I suppose I must do as others do; but I wish I could emulate the dormouse and hibernate until all the so-called festivities were at an end."

"I wish I could take you with me! Damaris,

I ought not to speak; you are so young—just twelve years my junior, and Sir Armitage is away; but I am afraid to leave you absolutely unfettered, darling! Darling! can you care just a little for me—?"

"Good evening!" said a voice, so near that it startled Jocelyn and evoked a little shriek from Damaris. "I am going up to Mrs. Redgrave's; so, with your permission, we will travel together," and there was Duncan, looking very white and strange, yet with an unmistakable flash of triumph in his eyes.

"Why do you steal upon one like a thief?" Jocelyn demanded, angrily; "you have frightened Miss Vyse."

"I am sorry; but you were so engrossed in your conversation that I spoke three times before you heard me"—privately, Jocelyn thought he lied; neither was he mistaken—"Miss Damaris, I fear you have exerted yourself too much; you look tired."

"I am tired," the girl answered, and sank into silence; nor could she be cajoled into gossip through the remainder of the walk.

Her ears had been so hungry to drink in Jocelyn's words, her heart so eager to answer, for Damaris was not conventional; and now Jocelyn must go without receiving any assurance of her deep devotion; and so she was incensed with Duncan, although she believed his intrusion a mere accident. It was decidedly not that. He had deliberately planned to baffle his rival, and, for once, he succeeded.

There was no further chance for private speech that night, Mrs. Redgrave monopolising all her step-son's attention, saying, plaintively, that "Christmas would be a dull season for them all, without Jocelyn's presence; but she hoped he would benefit by the change and not quite forget them; although, no doubt, they could not compare favourably with his fashionable friends."

He took leave of Damaris before them all, contriving to say, as he pressed her tiny hand, "Trust in me, beloved, and wait!" then he was gone, and the girl's heart sank within her.

Christmas was a dull day for Damaris; even Rachel declared that she had never spent so weary a time, and longed for the morrow to come when they were to entertain a select company of friends, it being not only Boxing Day, but Miss Redgrave's birthday. Leah had purchased her an elegantly-bound edition of Duncan's sermons. Damaris, who was always generously supplied with money, had chosen a handsome gold bracelet, which she tendered with a pretty speech, and a prettier smile. She was consequently somewhat mortified when Rachel put it carelessly aside—though, in truth, she was eager to accept it—remarking that she was very kind, but that "ornaments of gold and silver had little attraction for a Christian woman."

"Don't be a hypocrite," cried Leah, contemptuously; "you know that you are delighted with your gift, and will not forget to wear it before our friends to-night, if only to spare our dear cousin pain."

The evening came, and with it the guests. Damaris full of thoughts of Jocelyn, had stolen away by herself to the conservatory—a minute one, and not remarkable for its collection of plants and shrubs; indeed its only real beauty was a giant rhododendron, behind which the girl took shelter. But her light garments betrayed her to a pair of lynx eyes, and presently to her intense disgust, Duncan joined her. He looked flushed and awkward, but still had a resolute air, and Damaris, feeling instinctively what was coming, braced herself up to the interview.

"Miss Vyse," the young man said, "I have found you at last; for a long time you have been playing hide and seek with me; whether from coquetry or natural maidenly modesty, I

do not know; but, having found you, I intend to be heard."

"Very well," answered Damaris, with the sangfroid of a child, "I am listening; but I hope you will be brief. I shall be missed."

"You offer that as an excuse," he said, hastily. "You are fencing with me. Why do you use such tactics with me? I assure you they are absolutely useless."

"He has the hide of a rhinoceros," thought Damaris, disdainfully.

"I came here to-night to tell you that I love you. If you will not hear me now, I will tell it you again and again, until I weary you into acquiescence by my very importunity. Miss Vyse—Damaris—will you marry me?"

"No, I won't!" she said, slowly and emphatically. "You are already all but pledged to Rachel. I will steal away no girl's lover."

"I never loved Miss Redgrave; if she thinks so, the fault is her own. I have never given her reason to believe me more than her friend and well-wisher. How could I give a thought to Rachel Redgrave when Damaris Vyse was near?"

"But before I came?" the girl cried, quickly. "How was it then, Mr. Campbell? Let me relieve my mind by telling you, openly and honestly, I despise you from the very bottom of my heart."

He was white to the lips with rage, but not so white as the woman who was listening close by, whose heart was throbbing so fiercely, she feared its beating must be heard.

"You would not so receive a proposal from Jocelyn Redgrave," Duncan panted. "If I were your equal in wealth and position, you would not so flout me; but I will win you, yet. I heard all that passed between you on Christmas Eve, and I swore then you should never give yourself to him whilst I had life and breath."

"A very laudable resolution for a man of your calling," cried the girl, in a white heat—she was too honest to deny her love for Jocelyn—"it really does you credit, Mr. Campbell; but—but I am afraid that in Society you would be regarded rather—as a cad."

She drew those few last words in Jocelyn's cynical style, and he recognised it. Catching her hands he said:

"You are adding insult to injury, and you shall pay dearly for your disdain. Even Jocelyn Redgrave will unconsciously help me to my revenge. He would not make a woman his wife who had had love passages with another man."

She snatched her fingers from his clasp.

"Do not touch me any more," she said, fiercely; "do not even dare to speak to me. Your mere presence here is an insult to me; and when you so far presume as you have done to-night, I could kill you! If my father were in England you dare not so address me," and then she left him, walking with the air of an offended queen, and never seeing the crouching woman behind the rhododendron.

Presently Duncan left the conservatory too, and then Rachel, white and wild, rose and looked after him with jealous love in her eyes, envy and hatred in her heart. Long she stood there, bated in her own wicked passions, and when at last she had succeeded in smoothing the frown from her brow, erased the signs of her inward conflict, she returned to the prim drawing-room and primmer guests, resolved in her heart that Damaris Vyse should never oust her from the place she coveted.

The dinner was not a success; and Damaris was glad when Leah, noticing her pale looks, suggested she should go to bed.

"I know what you are thinking," she said, hanging about her cousin affectionately, "that we are a stupid lot, and I suppose you

are right. What is the matter with Rachel? She makes me positively ashamed of her; her devotion to Mr. Campbell is so disgustingly obvious, his contempt for her as pleasantly palpable. All to-night she has been regarding him with a meekly reproachful air; and, oh, Damaris, you wicked slaver! you are the cause. He fancies he loves you, and cheats himself into believing you are not invulnerable."

"Then, if you love me, undeceive him," said Damaris, crossly, and hid her pretty, bright head beneath the coverlet.

Three days later Damaris dined with the Gillings. Neither Rachel nor Mrs. Redgrave had been invited, as they most certainly would have refused, and Leah, who was rather a favourite with the doctor's wife, was confined to the house by a sharp attack of influenza. Damaris would have stayed with her, but this Leah most strenuously forbade.

"Go, dear old Dame, and enjoy yourself to the utmost," she said. "Well, you are bound to do that, because the Gillings are so very nice."

So Damaris has gone, in all the bravery of white silk and pearls, looking her very best, as little Mrs. Gillings assured her.

They dined at six, and then the Doctor proposed they should go to the Corn Exchange, where a company of actors were to perform "The Lady of Lyons."

"I suppose they are not much better than bara stormers," he said, with a laugh, "but we shall get some fun, anyhow. What fools they must be to pitch on saintly Slowcum! My dear dame, why are you so serious?"

"I am afraid Mrs. Redgrave does not approve theatres."

"But this is not a theatre, only a Corn Exchange," said Dr. Gillings, with his jolly laugh, "so you are not transgressing."

And Damaris, who had a girl's natural, healthy love of amusement, made no further remonstrance. But she would hardly have enjoyed the evening so greatly had she known whose eyes had followed her as she entered the ugly building, or how speedily Duncan Campbell took his news to Mrs. Redgrave. In pious horror, that lady said:

"I hope the place may burn to the ground, and that the triflers in it may meet their just reward."

Leah looked shocked at such a sentiment, but, knowing remonstrances were useless, held silence.

At ten o'clock all the lights were extinguished, and the doors barred.

"Who will sit up for Damaris?" ventured Leah, but her mother sharply bade her go to her own room, and she obeyed reluctantly, but she neither lay down nor undressed.

Towards midnight Damaris returned; she had enjoyed the evening immensely, and now she bade her friends a cheery good-night, saying, laughingly:

"Pray go home, good people; all Slowcum is asleep, don't wake it."

Then, as they left, she rang the bell, but no answer came. Again and again she repeated her summons, with the same result.

"I am locked out," she thought, forlornly; then she heard Leah's voice in the hall.

"Shame on you, mother!" it said. "I will not stand by and witness your disgrace."

CHAPTER IV.

The next moment the door was flung open, and Leah appeared, candle in hand; behind her stood Mrs. Redgrave, her stern face sterner than ever, and her eyes gleaming angrily. As Damaris entered she said:

"But for your friendless condition I would positively have refused you admission to-night, considering you no longer a fit associate for my daughters. Against my known wishes you have sought a doubtful pleasure, and to-morrow all Slowcum will condemn me that I permitted you so to disgrace yourself—and us."

Damaris stood before her, very white and proud. Ordinarily she was the sweetest natured of girls, but now her pride took fire, and with an ominous flash in her dark eyes, she said:

"I fail to see any disgrace in what I have done. I have been my father's companion at the opera or theatre often. He would hardly take me to doubtful places to share a doubtful pleasure. I am, unfortunately, compelled by circumstances to remain with you a little longer, but by the next mail I will beg Sir Armitage to remove me from your care—and your insolence."

With her head reared high she went up to her room, but when Leah would have followed her Mrs. Redgrave sternly forbade her, remarking that she was already being led away by the force of a bad example, and was no longer the dutiful daughter and devout Christian she once was.

To tell the truth the lady was a little frightened now by her own conduct and her young cousin's manner of viewing it. She half hoped that Damaris would hold out the olive branch to her the following morning. But this was not the girl's intention. She was wounded very deeply, her maidenly pride and modesty had been outraged, and she felt that it was perfectly impossible for her to treat Mrs. Redgrave in the future with anything beyond cold tolerance.

She was very pale when she took her seat at the table, and her heavy eyes showed that she had not slept. With a little disdainful gesture, she handed Mrs. Redgrave a letter, saying:

"Will you read it, please, it is to papa; and I wish you to know exactly what I have said. I never strike in the dark."

Feeling excessively uncomfortable, Mrs. Redgrave obeyed.

"My dear father,

"I want you to let me come out. I am not happy at Slowcum, and I seem born to make trouble for my cousins. I am a constant source of annoyance to Mrs. Redgrave, and the relations between us are very strained. I am sure she would be intensely relieved by my departure, as I am regarded here as a firebrand; and you would not wish me to remain to render matters uncomfortable for her. I am perfectly strong, and desire nothing so much as to see you. Please send for me, and believe me, now and for ever,—Your loving,

DAMARIS."

"I think," said Mrs. Redgrave, "you have written in the heat of passion; suppose you take to-day to consider the matter, to-morrow you will perhaps recognise the fact that in all I do I have your best interests at heart."

"If I waited until to-morrow I should miss the mail, and I was perfectly calm when I wrote. If you feel you cannot tolerate me until my father's answer arrives I believe Mrs. Gillings will be glad to take me in."

"You will remain with me until we can hear from Sir Armitage," answered Mrs. Redgrave, who dreaded nothing so much as an exposure of her conduct, and the subsequent scandal. "I shall only resign my charge at his desire."

"I am perfectly willing to do that," answered Damaris, quietly, and so the letter was duly sent, Leah declaring, with tears in her eyes, that Damaris was a poor, ill-

used darling, and Duncan a cowardly, despicable tale-bearer.

"If Jocelyn had been here," she added, "mother would never have dared to act as she did. It was all Rachel's fault, too; she has such influence over mother, and is so jealous of you."

Damaris sighed.

"I would like to be her friend," she said softly. "I am so sorry for her; she is wasting so much love on an unworthy object—poor Rachel!"

That afternoon Duncan saw Miss Vyse alone, but when he would have remonstrated with her upon her frivolous conduct, she stayed him with a quick, imperative gesture.

"I will not answer to you for my actions," she said, in soft, cold tones. "I do not acknowledge your right to question me." And without another word she left him.

He was furious, and swore to himself that, sooner or later, he would humble her pride; that, for all her disdain, he would compel her to do his will—in short, she should be his wife, and he did not much care by what means he won her.

He hardly calculated, however, upon Leah's tactics. That young lady, writing secretly to Jocelyn, said:

"For my sake, act with prudence. I positively dare not let mother know I have written you concerning her shameful conduct towards Damaris, who, I am sure, is very unhappy with us. And Duncan Campbell pesters her with his attentions, thereby making Rachel her enemy, and incensing mother. Please do not refer to this note when you write, but come home as soon as your engagements are ended. I have a shrewd suspicion that you are not indifferent to my dear Dame—and I know you can help her. I would give a great deal to see her happy, she has done so much for me."

In his heart he blessed Leah for her information, and as soon as it was possible he went down to Slowcum. It was eleven o'clock when he arrived, to find Mrs. Redgrave and her daughters had gone to chapel. There was only Damaris to welcome him, and indeed he wanted no other. But he refused all offers of refreshment, saying he had dined on the way, and adding:

"Shall we not begin our new year together by taking part in the midnight service?"

She was quite agreeable, and went away to dress, her heart full of a deep, exquisite joy.

Quietly they walked to church together, and the sweet, solemn service calmed the girl as nothing else could have done. It was very short, and as once more they stepped into the open the wild bells rang out a peal of merriment which echoed cheerily through the frosty air and the naked boughs of the giant trees.

"A happy New Year to you," said Jocelyn, gravely; and then by one quick glance assuring himself they were alone upon the white road, he, turning, took both her little hands in his, bending low over her, speaking in a hushed voice:

"Damaris, my darling, let me finish what I attempted to say before we were parting. Sweetheart, shall the new year be the brightest in our lives—will you give yourself to me, despite all my unworthiness? Oh, my dear, can you understand ever so little how much you are to me? I love you, Damaris, with a whole heart. I love you! Child, what will you do with me?"

She was trembling very much; but she was so essentially true that she could not keep back her confession.

"I have loved you all along," she said, under her breath. "I could not help myself; I shall love you until I die, and after death!"

The serene stars looked down upon them as they plighted their troth; the beautiful cloudless sky was above them, and there was no shadow upon their lore. How could they guess through what deep waters they must go before they reached the haven of their dear desire?

Presently Jocelyn said: "Shall we be going? It is very late; or rather early, and Mrs. Redgrave will cross-examine us severely. Oh, little darling, what a happy man you have made me!"

"Jocelyn, will you promise not to be very angry when I ask you to keep our—our engagement a secret until papa comes? I don't think I could bear to listen to congratulations that meant nothing, and—and—well, I want to have my love all to myself for a little while. I am so selfish I would wish my joy to be entirely mine for a little while."

And what could he do but acquiesce, seeing her wish was but the outcome of her love? He did it all the more readily because he would be compelled to leave her in the course of the week, to attend business of a purely professional nature. No one guessed their happy secret, unless, indeed, it was Leah, and she was wise enough to hold her peace, knowing that Rachel would make matters unpleasant for the lovers, being herself so sorely disappointed. But Damaris lived in her Paradise, telling herself a hundred times a day that she was the most fortunate of all girls, blest beyond her deserts, and that the whole earth held no man who could compare favourably with Jocelyn. She was not even downcast when he left her; she held his words of love close, and saying to herself many times: "In a week he will return!" set bravely to work to make that week pass quickly.

It had nearly ended when Rachel went to her mother in an agony of tears, and casting herself on the rug before her, cried wildly that she could no longer endure her love and her despair, that only in death could she find the peace of which Damaris and Duncan had robbed her. But just now she had seen him take the girl's hand in his, and, lifting it to his lips, kiss it many times.

"And she encouraged him," said Rachel, hardly knowing how grossly she lied, because she was carried out of herself by her foolish love and mad rage. "Oh, mother! oh, mother! my heart will break! He did love me before she came; he always sought me out of all others, and she, with her false ways and words, has blinded him to all but her beauty—for she is beautiful! I wish, oh, I wish, some great plague might rob her of her loveliness—I wish that she were dead!"

"Hush, hush, Rachel! you will be overheard; and don't you know that curses come home to roost? But I can help you."

She rose and walked hurriedly to and fro, whilst Rachel watched her with angry, swollen eyes. Presently she paused.

"I meant to go to the grave hugging my secret close, because it seemed to reflect some discredit even upon me, whose life has been so stainless. But for your sake, my dearest, loved child, I will speak, and that arch-traitress shall be humbled to the very dust. Duncan Campbell shall have his eyes opened to his folly; he is hardly the man to court shame."

She paused, and Rachel, lying there, asked, hoarsely:

"What is it you know? At least share your secret with me."

Mrs. Redgrave, stooping, smoothed her ruffled hair with a gesture which had more of tenderness in it than one would have conceived possible from her.

"My poor child, my poor child! Well, let who will blame me, your wrongs shall

be righted; and if your heart is set upon Duncan Damaris Vyse shall not steal him from you. He would seem to call her wife if he knew the truth. She is the lawfully born child of Sir Armitage and Lady Vyse, but within three years of her birth her mother eloped with her father's friend. She did not die, as was given out; the matter was hushed up for the child's sake."

Rachel sat erect, her sallow cheeks flushed crimson, her eyes glittering with an ill light.

"And you will tell him?"

"Yes, for your sake."

"And when, when? Let it be soon, before he has had opportunity to offer himself and his name."

"I will tell him to-night; but, Rachel, it is not necessary that Leah should know; she is infatuated with the girl."

"Oh, by all means keep the story from her, she would bring Jocelyn down upon us; and although he is a proud man, I do not think anything short of crime on Damaris's part would make him forego the hope he nurses. He thinks I am blind, but I have read his secret easily, and can only wonder that as yet he has not spoken to her."

"Now, Rachel, make yourself look as nice as you can, and do away with these tear-marks. Remember that to-night means victory or utter defeat for you, and that everything depends upon yourself. Damaris and Leah are dining out; you can make some trivial excuse to go to your own room, and I will then tell Duncan all."

For once Rachel was like wax in her mother's hands, from first to last obeying her implicitly; and when, protesting that her head ached badly, she retired to her own room, she had no fear for her ultimate success.

Mrs. Redgrave was by no means a diplomatist, so she went straight to the subject.

"Dear Mr. Campbell, you know how great an interest I have always taken in you, how very, very anxious I am for your welfare, consequently you will not consider me officious when I speak to you with regard to the feeling I am afraid you entertain for Miss Vyse."

Duncan flushed and seemed about to speak, but Mrs. Redgrave was too quick for him.

"I am quite ready to grant that she is pretty, and it does not detract from her charms that she is also an heiress. But she is frivolous and shallow. A minister's wife should be of grave demeanour; but, unfortunately—and now I beg you keep this secret, because Lady Vyse was my own cousin—unfortunately, she inherits her mother's nature, and I fear will bring shame to her husband as her mother did before her." And then she told him all the sad story as the world knew it, he listening with downcast eyes and inscrutable face. "You will see that I am acting for your good, against my own inclination," she said, with a prodigious sigh. "I never would have spoken but for the esteem in which I hold you;" and Duncan thanked her cordially. But once away from the house his whole demeanour changed.

"You fool," he muttered, "to think you could beguile me! And now, Damaris, you are in my power!"

CHAPTER V.

Duncan went to bed in a jubilant mood; he rose light-heartedly the following morning. Really, Mrs. Redgrave had been very foolish, he thought; he knew very well what were her wishes, and he laughed as he said:

"She has just removed the only obstacle to their fulfilment by putting this weapon into my hand. Without it I was powerless. Now, if persuasion fails with my dear Lady

Disdain, I will try threats. It would kill her to know her mother's shame was common property, and that the world recognised her as a wanton woman's child. She will prefer obscurity and me to ignominy," reflected the young minister. "Thank you, Mrs. Redgrave for your kindly invitation, but this fly does not walk into your parlour."

He went as usual to the house, treating Damaris with a chill courtesy, which was eminently agreeable to her, and lulled Rachel's bitter doubts to rest. She was almost sorry now that he had been made acquainted with the story of Lady Vyse, because, although it had been a splendid revenge upon Damaris, it yet reflected some shame upon themselves. Patiently the young man waited an opportunity for speech. He did not intend to spoil all by premature action now; and at the close of ten days his dogged determination was rewarded. He had been walking through some of the adjacent meadows where he saw a slight figure before him. None of the slowcum girls had that grace of movement, nor dressed with such dainty elegance. With a throb of triumph he recognised Damaris, and hastened after her. The meadows were lonely—everything was in his favour—and yet he felt a little nervous as he drew nearer the girl, who never turned her head, or showed any curiosity as to the new comer, although his step rang out clearly upon the frozen path.

"Miss Vyse," he said, as he halted beside her, "this is a lucky encounter."

She started, and swerved ever so little to one side as he accosted her, and the colour was high in her cheek, as she answered, coldly:

"I am at a loss to understand why you should consider it lucky—we meet so often. I—I wish we did not."

"Don't hurry," he said, persuasively; "I have something to say, and to which you must listen, if you value your own future happiness and peace. I am not jesting"—as she regarded him with scornful incredulity. "Some time ago, Damaris, I asked you to be my wife, and you refused; to-day I ask you again. Think well before you answer, lest you regret your hastiness."

His tone conveyed a threat; but, arguing that she had nothing to fear, the girl answered:

"The answer I gave you then, I now repeat. Believe me, Mr. Campbell, in this thing I shall never change."

"And I believe you will. I know you are hoping one day to be Jocelyn Redgrave's wife; but that day will never come. He is a proud man, and would not willingly lend his name to shelter another from disgrace. I tell you, when I have made him acquainted with certain facts he will at once sever any ties that may exist between you."

She confronted him, then, with flashing eyes. "How dare you speak to me in such a fashion? How dare you so much as hint that my name is not spotless? You shall answer to Mr. Redgrave, and—and my father for this gratuitous insult!"

"I would not count upon Redgrave's help," sneered Duncan, "you will find him but a broken reed; and your father has suffered so much already that it would be merciful to leave him in peace. If you will not believe me, however, go to Mrs. Redgrave for an explanation of my words."

"Not if you are a man, you will speak out. You shall. What have you to urge against me or my father?"

"Nothing; but you forget that you once possessed a mother."

"My mother died, sir, when I was little more than a baby."

"She did not; it is uncertain, even now, that she is not in the flesh. Years ago she

deserted her husband for the sake of his friend."

Damaris stood like one stricken helpless, her face as white and rigid as a carved presentment of Medusa; then she broke out wildly.

"It is a lie! a foul lie!" and struck him sharply across the mouth with her glove.

He caught and held her hand, and a moment they glared like wild creatures into each other's eyes. Then Duncan said:

"It is no lie; if you will not accept my word, ask Mrs. Redgrave if I lie; ask Sir Armitage Vyse what manner of woman his lady was. Why, he is so reticent about his past, and why of his own free will he never speaks her name?" Ask him, too, why he took you abroad at such an early age, that your mother's sin—which is your shame—should grow into an old story, and at last be forgotten, save by those who suffered because of it? I love you. If you will listen to me, I will try to make you happy. It is not many men who would care to call you wife, knowing all. Jocelyn Redgrave least of any; and if you refuse to hear me, he shall know."

Every word he said carried conviction with it to the wretched girl. He spoke like one who has the bare fact before him, and believes in them implicitly. Damaris was stricken to the very soul; so ashamed that she could have grovelled in the dust before him. Her voice sounded far away when she said:

"I dare not believe you; it is too horrible a tale; but—but, oh! Heaven! if it is true, I will marry no man—take my shame into no honest house. Oh! if you had loved me ever so little you would have spared me the knowledge of this ignominy!"

"Not so; it is the only argument I can bring to bear upon you. Damaris, only trust yourself to me, and you shall never regret doing so. I will never recall this story to your mind."

"You would not need," she answered, drearily, "I shall never forget it. Oh, leave me! Go away! Let me have peace! I—I am not myself. If ever you felt one throb of pity—"

"I do pity you," he interrupted, quickly, "and I love you. I will leave you now as you wish it, but to-morrow I will come for your answer. If it is what I hope and pray it will be, this day shall be clean blotted out of our lives; if it is otherwise—"

"Well?"—as he paused, threateningly—"what then, Mr. Campbell?"

"I should advise you to remove from Slowcum, which does not regard you too favourably even now."

She looked at him with wifely scorn.

"You shall hear my decision, to-morrow. Now go!" and, without a word, he went, confident of victory, and already planning what he would do when he gained possession of Damaris and her fortune.

When she could see him no longer, the wretched girl slipped down upon the frosty grass, and with her face hidden in her outstretched arms, broke into horrible tearless sobs. All her life lay in ruins before her; her mother had sinned grievously, and the world visited her misdeeds upon her innocent child. Ah, that was the world's way and Heaven's justice. Of what use were her complainings.

"Mother, mother!" she cried, heart-brokenly, "how could you so betray my father's trust? How could you so dower me with shame?"

All her life long she had loved and revered the memory of the beautiful woman she had believed long dead; and now she saw her an outcast, a worthless creature, too low for hate, too evil for pity to weep

over. Then she thought of Jocelyn, and the words he had spoken on the occasion of their first walk returned to her with cruel force: "I would marry the woman I loved, however poor and humble she might be, provided her ancestors could show a clean slate," and then her own remark: "If not, you would punish her for their faults?" and his quick response: "I should be afraid that she might inherit some of their peccadilloes, and transmit them to her children."

Clearly, Jocelyn's love was no longer for her. She lifted her wild face to the darkening sky, and, in her agony, she cried aloud:

"My love, my love, good-bye! There is nothing left to hope now, nothing to fear—I know the worst; and you are free!"

She lay there until she was numbed, and when at first she tried to rise she could scarcely move. Clutching at the fence for support, she clung there for a moment; then slowly and painfully she made her way home. But it was dark when she reached the house, and Mrs. Redgrave met her with displeasure visible upon her face.

"You are late, Damaris; where have you been? Might I trouble you to remember the rules of the house? Gracious Heavens!" as the lamp-light fell upon the white face and soiled robes, "what has happened? You look as though you had seen a ghost!"

"I have looked on death," said Damaris, slowly, "the death of pride, hope, love."

And then she took the others reluctant hand in hers.

"You are a woman and a mother—you should be compassionate. Oh, if only for the sake of my womanhood, tell me—was my mother what I have heard her called to-day?"

"Who has told you the story?" cried Mrs. Redgrave, confused and dismayed. "It was ill done."

"You need not say any more," the poor child answered, "you have not denied it; and now I know why you have always regarded my light-heartedness with suspicion. I shall never be gay any more; and when I am gone away perhaps you will even be a little sorry for me."

"Gone away, Damaris? I hope you will do nothing rash?"

"No; where would be the use? Would it wash away the stain?"

And then she crept slowly up-stairs to her room, leaving Mrs. Redgrave a prey to most unpleasant reflections. It was too clear to the lady that Duncan had been the informant—for Rachel had not left home that day—and she wondered what motive had actuated the disclosure. In her perplexity she made a clean breast of the whole matter to her daughters; and after such a violent outbreak from Leah as she had never before heard, she found herself alone with the tearful and fearful Rachel.

Leah went straight to her cousin.

"Dear Dame," she said, tenderly, "I am afraid it is all too true, because mother is not given to lying, and does not speak at random. But why should you be condemned for another's sin? Who will think less of you? And don't all medical men declare that daughters most resemble their fathers, not only in physique, but mental and moral qualities?"

But her words fell upon deaf ears. Damaris sat gazing out of the window with wide, unseeing eyes. So Leah put an arm about her.

"To-morrow, Dame, I shall send for Jocelyn. He will know best how to comfort you, and punish that unutterable cad, Campbell."

A shiver passed over the listener's frame.

"You are very good to me, dear," she said, gently, "but no one can help me now.

The ship in which I had stored all my treasure has gone down—and I am ruined. Dearest Leah, you have been good to me always, I shall think of you with love all my days. However silent and forgetful I may seem, remember that. Heaven grant you all the blessings it has denied me!"

"Don't!" cried Leah, beginning to sob. "You talk like one who is dying and knows her end is near. Dame, dear, can you ever forgive us? You were so happy when you came to Slowcum, it seemed that trouble could never touch you. Oh, let me send for Jocelyn; he will know what to do—and he loves you."

"Hush! I cannot bear to hear you. But when he has learned the truth—if I should no longer be here—will you tell him that I wish him all joy, that I do not hold him bound by any promise—yes, Leah, we were lovers once—that he is absolutely free, and my one hope is that he will forget me! It will be better so, oh, much better so!" And when she spoke further in the same strain Leah's tears flowed afresh, and she was loathe to leave Damaris.

She lay sleepless throughout the night, fearing she hardly knew what, listening for some movement in her cousin's chamber; but all was quiet. And when, in the morning Damaris came down to breakfast as usual, only looking paler, and very weary, she half despised herself for her fears.

The uncomfortable meal ended, Miss Vyse declared her intention of going out, and no one raised any opposition; indeed, two of the quartette were greatly relieved when she was gone. She did not appear at luncheon, but as she frequently stayed at the Gillings' and the Vicarage, no one was alarmed. The short afternoon wore to a close, and Leah declared she would run over to Mrs. Gillings for Damaris, "who really could not have noticed how dark it was growing."

But the doctor's wife had not seen Miss Vyse that day, neither had she been to the Vicarage; and, with a great dread in her heart, Leah ran home, to find her mother and Rachel intent upon a hastily-written note which had been recently delivered by the station-master's son. It was addressed to the elder lady, and ran thus:

"I am leaving you for ever. I cannot stay where my mother's story may soon be common property. I wish that I could die; but that is selfish, because in all the world my father has only me, so I must live, and try to be brave for his sake. I am sorry for any annoyance I may have caused you, and I ask your forgiveness. Give my dearest love to Leah, and tell her not to fret; that all will be well with me soon. I am going to my father.

DAMARIS."

"Thank Heaven!" cried Rachel. "I don't care where she goes, so long as she goes from here."

"After that sentiment," said Leah, "I should blush to call myself a Christian."

In his room sat Duncan, reading in a dazed way these few words.

"You have humbled my pride and broken my heart, but freedom, at least, is left me, and for that I thank Heaven.

DAMARIS VYSE."

CHAPTER VI.

"What motive had Duncan for telling Damaris that story?" Mrs. Redgrave said the next morning—she was more disturbed by the girl's flight than she cared to show—"It was told him in confidence."

"As if he would be likely to remember that when he had his own ends to serve," remarked Leah, scornfully. "He is in love with her and her fortune, and he thought he would bribe her into marrying him."

"It is false!" cried Rachel, fiercely, "it is utterly false!"

"If you think so, why are you so excited about it? Well, for once I am going to act on my own responsibility, and telegraph for Jocelyn. He will know what to do."

"He will be furious," said Mrs. Redgrave tearfully. "And if anything should happen to Damaris I never dare meet Sir Armytage."

"I scarcely wonder at that," broke in the irrepressible Leah, "we have behaved shamefully to his daughter, and when he puts in an appearance we shall get our deserts."

Then she went away to send her message, and the remainder of the day passed drearily in waiting Jocelyn's advent.

He arrived late in the afternoon, Leah meeting him at the station.

"Well," he said, after the ordinary greeting, "what is this important business which so nearly concerns me?"

"Oh, Jocelyn, it is about Damaris; she has left us, and we don't know where she is gone—I will tell you all about it as we go along."

But Jocelyn refused to budge an inch until he had heard all. Leah had never seen him angry before, and his white, stern face startled and frightened her.

"You should have told me before what manner of life Mrs. Redgrave and Rachel led her," he said, hoarsely, "and why did you not telegraph the news, instead of bringing me down here, where I can do nothing?"

His anger and pain made him unjust to her, but Leah was not ready, as usual, with a sharp retort; she understood too well what he was suffering.

"I am not going home with you," he continued. "I shall never enter Mrs. Redgrave's house again until Damaris is restored to us; and that hound Campbell shall pay dearly for his part in this loathsome business. I may as well tell you that she has promised to be my wife. I don't care what her mother may have been, I love her for herself, and I'll not rest until she is found."

On making inquiries of the station-master, they learned that Miss Vyse had taken a ticket to St. Pancras the previous day, and that there was a train to that station in an hour's time. Jocelyn decided to return to town by that, and as he would not enter his stepmother's house, he and Leah walked slowly up and down the quiet road, until the time came for parting. And in that hour, he learned all the petty persecutions which Damaris had endured in silence, being too proud and sensitive to complain to him or any; and his heart was hot with wrath against those who had done their best to make her wretched, and had finally driven her away. He bade Leah an affectionate good-bye, and, promising to acquaint her with his movements, was soon on his way back to town. He had telegraphed his servant to meet him, and the man was in readiness.

"I brought the letters down with me, sir," he said; "I thought they might be important," and he handed Jocelyn three. One was addressed in delicate feminine handwriting, which at a glance he knew for his fiancée. Tearing it hastily open, he read:

(Continued on page 141.)

THE armour of horse and rider in the fourteenth century frequently weighed as much as 100 pounds.

TWO WOMEN.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was a strange experience for Hester to be back in the old house where, though she had spent a few happy, pleasant hours during George Munro Campbell's lifetime, she had had to endure so many months of misery and misunderstanding.

Now, instead of being relegated to a sort of sublimated attic for a room, she was lodged in one of the most dainty and luxurious apartments of Sedgebrooke. Violet had herself led her step-sister up to this room. It was on the same floor as her own, and commanded a magnificent view of the park and the gardens, which had been at one time Hester's only solace and pleasure. Miss Graham was given a room also on this landing, quite close to that occupied by her young companion and friend.

Thoughts rose fast and varied in Hester's mind as she stood gazing out through her window to the magnificent trees beyond, to the velvet lawn and gorgeous flower-beds. She was not exactly sad as she stood there, for the beauty of the place appealed to her so distinctly, but she was conscious of a curious regret that she should have consented to make one of the return party to Sedgebrooke; and she resolved, with a faint, weary sigh, that she would begin at once to sketch out some plan for herself and Miss Graham. The old school-house at Helmetstone was no longer theirs to regard as a home. When it had been found that Miss Graham's health was in such a weak and almost alarming condition, she had negotiated a sale of the school through Mr. Chetwynde. A purchaser had been found immediately, and Helmetstone would know her no more.

Hester did not regret this. She had no wish to go back to the old house; the memory of poor Leonore was with her too vividly, and the shadows of the past year hung too closely about her.

"It would be nice to be away in some far-off spot with a great sea dashing at one's feet, and a strong wind blowing with fierceness, but with freshness, upon one."

This was one of the thoughts that formed itself in the girl's mind as she dressed herself for dinner, in a languid fashion, this first evening of her visit to Violet's beautiful home. It was not a thought only, it was an intense longing; the outcome of this strange languor and weakness which for some reason or another had come over Hester the last few weeks. She felt suddenly tired—not only physically tired, but mentally exhausted. She shrank even from sitting and recalling the events that had constituted her life since Christmas; she desired nothing so much as to cast thought from her. That yearning for a wild strong wind to sweep round and about her spoke volumes of the strain that had been put on the girl's nervous system of late. She was too languid, as we have said, to be capable of any great exertion of mind or body, yet her nature was too powerful to be quickly silenced, and despite all the kind and generous thoughts that came so softly and so gently at all times, Hester could not quite reconcile herself to the present state of things between her step-sister, Lady Thurso, and herself. She had welcomed the advance Violet had made to her eagerly, as she would have welcomed anything that might mean good for the future of the man who was so dear to her; but there were moments when Hester's strong common-sense, her clear, keen perception, urged her to doubt, to mistrust, the extraordinary change that had been worked in

Violet since that never to be forgotten, and most terrible night in the hotel at Liverpool. Hester would have been only too glad to silence these doubts once and for ever; to have turned to Violet freely, and accepted her in her present gentle, quiet, resigned form as the true, the better likeness of her nature, but, alas! there was so much in the past to work against this, such different pictures in her memory, that, try as she would, would never be assimilated with the picture Violet now presented; that it was no wonder doubts and fears should find shape and significance in Hester's noble heart.

They were with her more clearly, more certainly, than they had been of late on this particular evening. It was the return of old memories, of old associations, that aroused them. As Hester sank into a chair, having completed her toilette for dinner—not without much weariness and disinclination for the duty—she felt, almost for the first time since Violet and she had been together, that the calm, the silent, the resigned air Lady Thurso now wore was, and could be nothing but a mask. No woman living, and of a certainty, no woman of Violet's disposition, could have grown naturally and so swiftly into the frame of mind Lady Thurso now presented to her step-sister.

Memory of the past came fleet before Hester's eyes. The scenes of unreasonable jealousy, of vulgar, ostentatious folly, of recklessness; then her own bitter personal experiences, Violet's rudeness to her, the savage attack on her that day when Mr. Crossley had led her from the house, the hot, furious, shameful words that Hester had had to endure from Violet in the hotel room; all rose clear and distinct now before Hester to give assurance to her late-come thought and strength to her doubt. She half rose in her chair, and a flush dawned on her pale cheek.

"What did it really mean?" was the question that came swiftly to her; and then, as she became conscious of the strange, the oppressive weakness that weighted her limbs, she sank back with a fast beating heart, and a vivid sense of regret and fear, that culminated in the very natural thought:

"Oh! I wish now I had not come! I am afraid. I do not understand Violet. How is it I have allowed myself to accept her so easily? She is not the woman to forget or forgive. What will the future bring forth? What is it she means to do? She will not be satisfied till she has shown her revenge in some way. She has always hated me—is it on me she will seek to revenge herself. For myself I do not care, though I am no so strong for the moment as I used to be—but if it should be on him—"

Hester's heart beat so swiftly as to be absolutely painful. And then she laughed slightly, though her hands were trembling.

"How foolish I am—how wrong! What should I doubt and fear in this way? Something is the matter with me. I—I am no myself. It is the return here; it is the recollection of the old miserable times. I will go and find Allie, she will cheer me up, she always does me good; and then to-morrow I must have a quiet chat with Miss Graham. We will decide to go away as soon as possible. I—I would rather not remain here there are many reasons—many."

Lady Alice was already dressed for dinner and together the two girls went downstairs and out into the garden.

"I am going to make a button-hole for my Billy," Lady Alice confessed, with a laugh, "and if you are good, Hester, you shall have one, too. What shall it be? Something warm to give a touch of color to you?"

Allie was regarding her friend's beautiful face intently.

"You know, Hester, my darling, I am really anxious about you. You have no conception how pale you are. Oh, yes, I know what you are going to say! You are always pale, and so you are. Yours is essentially not a dairymaid type of beauty; but all the same, dear, you have not seemed to me to be so very, very white as you are now. Your eyes look so big, too; they are like two great splendid jewels, now a sapphire, and now some other glistening colour, like the deep leaf of a violet. I am quite poetical, am I not?" Allie said, lightly, though her face wore an anxious expression, "but I am concerned all the same. Hester, you must promise, please, to get quite well and strong again as soon as possible."

Hester had laughed softly and rather shyly at Allie's description of her eyes.

"I am quite well," she began, and then she stopped and sighed. "No," she said, more hurriedly, "I don't think I am really very well, Allie, dear. I feel so tired, and dull, and depressed. But it is nothing. I expect the air of the village did not exactly suit me; I am much subject to climatic effects. That is the objectionable part of being endowed with nerves, but I shall soon be all right again, and I look forward immensely to our trip abroad."

"You are not going immediately, Hester?"

"Nothing is decided as yet," Hester answered, evasively. "Allie, give me a bunch of those carnations."

"Oh! I hope you won't go just yet. I am sure a few weeks here will do you all the good in the world."

Lady Alice plucked the carnations, and Hester pinned them in the bodice of her soft black gown.

"This place is not likely to be so happy to me as to you, Allie darling," she said, a little sadly; "it has for me many memories that lie like shadows on my heart."

"Ah!" Allie said, comprehensively, then she linked her arm tenderly in Hester's. "Ah, I forgot—forgive me, dear. Yet you must always recollect, Hester, that it was here you won dear Uncle George's heart, and so paved the way for our friendship."

Hester kissed the delicate, loving face.

"Anything connected with that must always be sweet to me," she said, and then the chimes sounded for dinner, and they went in.

The meal was a pleasant one. Lady Thurso showed herself in another new light, she proved to be amusing and yet agreeable. She was very simply dressed in some soft, white gown, and looked extremely youthful and pretty.

Allie, glancing at her now and then, was conscious of a feeling of satisfaction—of pleasure such as she had never experienced in looking at her brother's wife before. She understood now a little of the power of Violet's beauty and fascination that had led Thurso into making her his wife. She accepted this most unexpected and agreeable change in Violet as a promise for happier things in the future. And yet Allie could not feel that reliance on this promise she would have liked; neither could she bring herself to open her heart to her sister-in-law, and give her boundlessly of her love. Violet must show a steadfast—a marked change in reality, as well as in appearance, before Allie could grow to forget all she had learnt, and forgive all she had had to suffer at Lady Thurso's hands. It was her devotion to her brother, and her longing to see him happy that made Allie so eager to welcome any good change in Violet, and that there was a change, and one decidedly for the better, it was not possible to deny.

Dinner ended at a comfortably early hour,

and a sojourn was suggested to the twilight gardens by Lady Thurso.

Hester, who had been silent some moments before this, turned to Violet with a faint smile.

"I think," she said, evidently speaking with a great effort, "I think I must ask you to excuse me, Violet. I feel so very tired. I—I don't quite know why I should be tired like this, but—" She pushed herself on to her feet as she spoke, and stood holding to her chair for support. Even while the words were on her lips she swayed uncertainly, her eyes closed, and Billy Crossley had barely time to reach her with gigantic stride and a smothered exclamation when she lost consciousness altogether.

Lady Alice was in great distress, and Violet, too, expressed deep concern. Miss Graham had not joined the dinner table, she was too fatigued after the long journey, and had remained in her room. Hester was carried upstairs in Billy's strong arms, and the two others followed silently.

"We must send for a doctor," Allie had said very hurriedly to her lover, and Violet had promptly seconded the suggestion.

"Only Hester is very odd you know in her ideas," she said; "probably if we send into the village for the doctor she will refuse to see him when he comes."

"She can't refuse if she is unconscious," Mr. Crossley said, curtly; and then he had carried the slender form up the stairs slowly, and laid it gently and tenderly on the couch in Hester's room. "If you will tell me where to go and whom to fetch, Lady Thurso," he said after this, "I will go at once."

"She is coming round," Violet exclaimed in answer, and true enough, as she spoke, Hester's big eyes opened slowly, with a vague look in their depths, and yet a look full of mental suffering. As Allie knelt beside her and questioned her, however, Hester grew gradually better.

"Oh! no, no! please don't send for a doctor. It is nothing. I am only tired. Allie, dear, don't look so nervous. I don't believe I really fainted. I seemed to be conscious all the time, only I was too weak to rouse myself or—do anything." Her voice was now terribly weak, and it was easy to see that only Hester's courage and tender thought for her friend helped her to show so much vitality as she now did.

"You must please thank Billy for me," she said to Allie, when having done all she could to allay the agitation in her dear little friend, she besought both Lady Alice and Violet to go downstairs, and she would instantly retire to bed. "He has been so kind. This is the second time he has carried me. Poor Billy! and I am no light weight. Dear, dear Allie, good-night, I assure you I am now quite well. Go to Miss Graham for me, like the angel you are; let her know I am very tired. I don't want her to be alarmed."

Allie, needless to say, obeyed the smallest wish expressed. She flitted away to minister to the old blind governess in Hester's place, though her mind was by no means set at rest, and Lady Thurso went downstairs again slowly, a faint, strange smile playing about her lips, a look in her eyes that had no kinship with her young, fair appearance.

Billy Crossley was nowhere to be seen; but that did not trouble Violet, she walked to the open hall door, and stood looking out into the darkness of the night in a steady, almost a grim way. When she turned again her hands were rolled one in the other, and her lips no longer smiled; she had the air of a woman who was passing through a moment of intense mortification and disappointment, although, paradoxically, there was a touch of exultation—of strange triumph about her.

Allie came down the stairs wistfully.

"Have you seen Billy?" she inquired of Violet, and Lady Thurso shook her head—that faint smile flitting over her face again. Lady Alice did not follow her sister-in-law into the drawing-room, she threw herself into a chair in the hall, and gave way to her thoughts, which were exceedingly sad on Hester's account.

How long she sat there she could not have told; but the hall clock chimed ten before she roused herself.

"Where can Billy be, I wonder?" was the query that rushed into her mind, and at the very instant Mr. Crossley's tall form emerged from the gloom of the gardens and entered the hall.

"Billy! at last! Where have you been?" Allie ran to him and clung to his arm affectionately, giving a sigh of pleasure as she did so. All her troubles seemed to grow less when she was in close contact with her strong, cheery-voiced lover.

"I have been smoking," Mr. Crossley said; but he spoke evasively. He inquired for Hester, and expressed delight that she was better.

"I shall take her in hand to-morrow," he said, firmly. "Something is absolutely wrong, and I think I know the very man who can set it all right. He has not a big name, and he is not a great gun by any means, but he has just as clever a head on his shoulders as any doctor need have. I mean to talk to Hester like a Dutch uncle, and I shall insist on her seeing young Warren; she can trust me not to put her into the hands of a duffer," and then Mr. Crossley broke off in this to ask a question of his *fiancée*. "When did you hear from Dick last, Allie? Is he still at the Morse, or did he say anything about going elsewhere?"

"I heard yesterday morning he remains on another week. The Duke of Mull has asked him to join the party at Mull Castle for September, but I fancy Dick will come back here; he seems inclined for his home," and Allie finished with a scarcely audible sigh. "Poor Dick!" she said to herself.

Mr. Crossley held her slender figure very close to his heart, and then he kissed her and ordered her to go to bed immediately.

"I don't want two invalids on my hands. You are as pale as a ghost, Allie. That fainting-fit gave you a shock. Off you go, and sleep well. Don't dare to wake up before breakfast-time to-morrow!"

Allie laughed lightly, and then obeyed him. She confessed as she went she was tired, and she promised to sleep well.

Billy stood looking after her tenderly.

"My little love," he said to himself; and then his brow contracted. "Impossible to let Allie know my fears and thoughts, she would not understand them, and it would upset her altogether. No, Dick is the person who is wanted about this crisis. It is fortunate he is still at the Morse. I should imagine, making a rough calculation, that he will reach Sedgebrooke about this time to-morrow night, or, at any rate, early the next morning. I suppose my telegram will be sent off instantly; the station opens to-morrow; so we may expect to see Thurso walk in pretty quickly now, and jolly glad I, for one, shall be to see him, although, poor chap, if things are as I can't help feeling they are, he comes home to about as miserable a state of affairs as any man could wish to find. Poor Dick, poor old chap! By Jove, he is worthy of a better fate than has been given him!"

And with this thought in his mind Mr. Crossley turned on his heel and sought the smoking-room, where he sat down and indited a long letter to the young struggling doctor, who was an old college chum and a staunch friend, telling him that if he could

find an hour during the next day or so in which to run down to Sedgebrooke, he—Crossley—would count it as a great and personal favour.

"With Dick on the spot, and Warren, with his sharp, ferret-like brains, I think we shall soon get to the bottom of these mysterious fainting fits. I have not known Hester very long, but I have known her just long enough to be quite certain she is not the sort of girl to be subject to hysteria, or to indulge in fainting from any organic weakness. A month ago she was the picture of health, never saw anyone in such splendid form. She could walk her half dozen miles, and run another at the end. If her heart is affected the disease has come on suddenly, and very strangely. God forgive me if I do wrong to any living creature, but I cannot think anything but bad of that yellow-haired little devil Thurso has made his wife. She is very sweet, and calm, and gentle now, but she doesn't get over me by such cunning. I doubt her absolutely. She hates Hester with all the might and strength of her hatred. She is not the sort of person to be turned into a noble nature all of a sudden, and bad as that chap Maxwell was, and worse as his influence was, I don't think," Billy summed up shrewdly, "that the fact of his having toddled out of the country in this abrupt and unexpected way could have been the cause of working such an extraordinary beneficial change in Lady Thurso. Hester has not taken me into her confidence, but I ain't as blind as most folk, and for the pains she took in managing to get my lovely ladyship out of that hole the other day, she may certainly expect to receive all due gratitude from the woman who hates as Violet Thurso can and does hate. Well, she is a clever little cat, and she does her work well; but if she thinks to come even with Hester in this damnable way, she is likely to be considerably disappointed; that's all I have to say on the matter."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The following day, to Allie's great delight, Hester expressed herself as feeling altogether better, and, in fact, she did not look nearly so ill or so tired as she had done the day before.

"It must have been the journey, and the heat," Allie said to Mr. Crossley.

Mr. Crossley said: "Um!" in return, which did not convey much, and yet seemed to signify a good deal.

"I am going to talk to Hester," he declared, and he went in search of Miss Trefusis.

He found her sitting under the big trees, an open book lying on her lap. She turned to him with a smile on her lips and in her eyes.

"What a lovely face it is, to be sure; the face of an angel!" the young man said to himself.

He sat down beside that graceful figure, and put on a most important air.

"Hester, I am going to talk to you like a father," he announced, thereby provoking a delicious laugh from Hester.

"Then I am rich, for you are the second father I have got to-day. Mr. Chetwynde wrote to me this morning announcing his intention to regard himself as my father; and then he took a father's privilege, and gave me a scolding, wrapped about with good advice—from his point of view."

"Ah! I am glad to find someone else tries to lick you into shape!" Mr. Crossley declared, with much warpath.

"Now, Billy!"

"Now, Hester!"

Billy turned to her with a frown that soon melted into a tender look.

"How do you feel to-day. Really, I mean, no humbug."

Hester smiled at him.

"Do I usually indulge in humbug, Billy?"

He nodded his head emphatically.

"All women do; they can't help themselves. Now, Hester, 'no kid,' as we used to say when I was a boy; how are you?"

"Better, absolutely better. I feel almost well this morning. I slept marvellously well, I don't remember when I had such a good night; in consequence, I feel a giant to-day."

"You look it," Mr. Crossley observed, sarcastically. "You have a Samson-Goliath-like air that is simply fearful to behold. I quake in my shoes as I look at you. I feel you could devastate Sedgebrooke and all it contains with one touch of your little finger!"

Here Mr. Crossley dropped his bantering tone.

"Hester, what do you think is the matter with you. Again I will use the mystic words 'no kid,' but just regard me as your brother, and tell me the straight truth. You must have some opinion about yourself; what is it?"

Hester answered him immediately.

"Honestly, dear Billy, with 'no kid'—to quote your very extraordinary words—I have not thought about myself. It is so unusual for me to be ill, you know. I am not really a giant, for I have a good stock of nerves; but, also, I have always been a remarkably healthy individual, and I don't remember a serious illness coming to me in all my life."

"Of course, you have been accustomed to faint when the fancy took you?" Billy suggested, and Hester, though she laughed, looked slightly indignant.

"Indeed, I have not! I never fainted in all my life before that day on the sea-shore. I can only imagine I am tired and out of sorts now. I certainly have felt very strange at times, but when people are not used to being ill, I suppose the slightest little thing annoys them."

"Your heart is all right?" was Mr. Crossley's next query; and at this Hester laughed back an answer.

"Dear Billy, how serious you look! What a comical doctor you would make; you ask such funny questions. Surely you don't think I am going to die, do you?"

"I hope not, dear," Billy replied, gravely; but the next moment he was laughing, too.

"I see I must renounce medicine as a profession; I am not built for a doctor. *Parlons d'autres choses*. What had Mr. Chetwynde been scolding you about?"

"He wants me to meet my father's people, he is always wanting it."

"Well, why not?"

"My reason is a sentimental one, perhaps; but I cannot bear to think that these people should seek me when they have turned their backs on my father and repudiated my mother."

"You are such a proud young woman, Hester."

"Yes," the girl answered, swiftly, "yes, I am proud, no one knows that better than I do. I suffer much pain through my pride, but I cannot conquer it, Billy."

"There is no need to do so, dear! To a girl placed as you are pride is the best that can belong to you, it is a guard that protects you and supports you. A woman without pride is a sad spectacle."

Billy's thoughts went to the memory of those days, not so long before, when Violet's reckless vanity and passion had made of her such a painful sight. There had been no pride in her heart, otherwise her conduct in connection with Maxwell would have been very different.

"Have you heard anything of your step-mother since that time she had need of you, Hester?" Mr. Crossley asked next. Hester shook her head.

"I think of her often," she said, in a low tone, "particularly now that I am here once again. It seems strange not to see her tall, stately figure coming across the lawn. Poor woman! she was not good nor kind to me; but she has tasted the bitterness of sorrow, now. She has her punishment."

"Does Lady Thurso speak of her?"

"Never," Hester said, quietly, "and as Violet is silent about her mother, I say nothing either, though I should like to know where she is now, and if she is less unhappy."

"What are you going to reply to Mr. Chetwynde, Hester?"

"The usual answer. I prefer not to meet the Trofuss family."

"You may alter your mind one of these days; wait till you are married, Hester."

Hester's delicate face was crimson for the moment.

"I shall never marry," she said, when she spoke, and she said the words quietly, without any emotion; but the hands lying clasped upon the open book trembled slightly.

Billy looked at her tenderly, then turned his eyes away from her face. It seemed to him almost an irreverence to look at her in this moment.

"Allie says you insist on rushing that unfortunate friend of yours off to the continent in the course of the next few hours," was all he remarked. "You know, Hester, there is a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and really—"

"You are a distinctly rude boy," Hester said, laughingly. "How dare you insinuate such things about me! Fancy suggesting I am cruel to my poor old Graney. You know she adores me."

"She doesn't do otherwise," retorted Mr. Crossley; then dodged his head to escape the book launched at it. "You won't go just yet, will you?" he asked, as he stooped to pick up this missile that had flown very wide of the mark.

"Not for a day or two. You are very anxious for my society, why is this?"

Hester lifted her delicate smiling face to his. He had risen now, and was standing in front of her.

"I want to introduce you to a chum of mine, who is coming down this week. Such a jolly chap—Paul Warren. You will like him, because he is clever as well as being nice."

"I want to get Graney away soon; but I should like to meet your friend, Billy; if he comes within the next two or three days, I shall see him, but otherwise—here comes Allie, to look after you. What are you two going to do this morning?"

"We are in love's land to-day—"

Where shall we go?

Love, shall we start or stay,

Or sail, or row?

There's many a wind and way,

And never a May but May;

We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we go?"

quoted Billy for answer.

Hester smiled back at him; and across at the girl's slender figure coming towards them.

"How happy you are!" she said, involuntarily, and then a rush of tears rose over her beautiful eyes and made the world dim for the moment. She was, after all, so young—scarcely a woman as yet—and with all this youth, with the vista of life's years stretched out before her, she could see no dawning of gold on the horizon of the future, no music of delight sounding faintly in the distance. Happiness was not for her—sorrow and

pain and desolation of heart were her portions.

There was a land of happiness for human beings—did she not know it? Fate had led her feet right up to the gateway of this land. A glimpse of its great—its overwhelming joys had been given her; a wave of its warm embracing air had touched her for the moment; but, even as she had looked, the gate had been closed, and she was shut outside alone for evermore.

It was not often that envy and yearning took possession of her, but there were moments when Hester was not so strong as at others, and the sight of Allie's great happiness, though it filled her with joy and infinite satisfaction, had also the power to hurt her now and then.

She conquered her weakness now by a gigantic effort, and she imagined that it had escaped all notice. It had not done so, however, Billy had seen the tears as he had heard the cry of pain in her voice, and his brows contracted as he turned to go and meet his betrothed. He had no words of consolation to offer, for he saw no hope in the future of this beautiful girl, who was so dear to them all.

"I can stand between her and Violet. I can save her from a good deal; but I cannot give her happiness. Alas! if only that power could be put into my hands, Hester, dear, how happy you should be!"

The day wore away.

Lady Thurso had received from Mr. Crossley the intelligence that he expected a visit from a friend of his the next day, and she expressed herself graciously pleased to see Mr. Paul Warren, when he should arrive.

The fact that Mr. Warren was by profession a doctor, and an exceedingly clever doctor, too, was not, however, vouchsafed to Lady Thurso by Mr. Crossley. An oversight on his part, no doubt.

Miss Graham had had a long, quiet chat with Hester, and their plans were made to leave England the end of the week.

"I think if we can find some cosy corner out in the Sunny South we will decide to ensconce ourselves there all the winter. What do you say, eh, Graney?"

"I say that whatever you do is right; only, Hester, my dear, I have my doubts about taking you so far away from all your friends, and then, my love, you must remember you are so young, you cannot make your life always with an old woman like me."

Hester kissed her friend softly.

"My life is made, Graney dear," said answered, and then with a little sigh and rather hurriedly: "I intend to be so happy out there in the sun. You will see how happy I shall be, Graney."

"Pray God you may, my dear—my more than beloved child."

"We will stop in Paris as we go," Hester said, later on. "I want to find poor Leonore's grave. I want to put some flowers upon it. I think of her so often, our poor, poor Leonore. At least, I can never be so unhappy as she was, for I have so many who love me; and she had only us, Graney. If I could have only been with her at the last! Ah! when I remember how she died, I feel I have no right to call myself a good woman, Graney, for I am full of hot, angry, wicked thoughts. Time will soften these down, perhaps; but I shall never forget Leonore, never!"

"You are not born to forget," Miss Graham said, and Hester acquiesced to this in silence.

No, she was not born to forget. She might put a whole world between herself and the man she loved, she might never see him again, she might be surrounded by soft, tender influences—love might be whispered again and again in her ears—but Hester would

never change; she would never forget. She opened her heart only to the few; but where she loved she loved always—a love unchanging to the end.

Dinner came and passed.

"She is undoubtedly better to-day, Billy," Lady Alice said, exultantly to her lover every now and then, and Mr. Crossley always responded with a quiet nod of his head.

Yes, Hester did look better; there was more animation about her, more colour in her cheeks. After dinner Mr. Crossley sauntered out into the gardens to smoke and think. He walked along mechanically, his mind occupied entirely with his thoughts, till he found himself as far as the lodge gates at the entrance to the grounds. He was just turning on his heel to retrace his steps when his ear caught the sound of wheels. Unconsciously he stopped, and then he saw a fly pull up at the gates, and a well-remembered voice shouted lustily for the lodge-keeper to come and admit the vehicle.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Crossley; "why, it's Dick! This is pretty quick work, and no mistake. I gave him till to-morrow morning. How the deuce has he managed to get here so quickly?"

Starting at a run Billy soon reached the gates and the fly.

"Send your traps up and get out and walk with me," he said to Thurso. "You have not lost much time, Dick. Why, I only sent my telegram this morning; I don't know how you have done it, dashed if I do."

Your telegram? What do you mean? I have had no telegram," Thurso answered, hurriedly, as he shook his friend heartily by the hand. "I left Scotland last night. I came up with young Camforth; the boy had got himself into a deuce of a scrape, and he begged me to come up and see if I could do anything for him with his father. Of course I could not refuse, and we landed at Euston this morning. I meant to have sent a wire saying I should be here to-night, but have not had one spare moment all day."

Billy Crossley's thoughts worked as quickly as his friend's speech.

"Just as glad you did not," he said, earnestly, as Thurso paused; "look here, Dick, it sounds odd and mysterious like, but I want you to let your things be sent up by hand to the back of the house, and you come with me. I have something that I want to say to you right away, and the sooner it is said the better."

Thurso's brows were contracted.

"Go ahead, Billy," he answered in a sharp way, that was full of ill-concealed agitation; "if it's anything bad I would sooner know it all at once; it can't be anything good, I am very sure," Thurso added, a little bitterly. "Good things and I have parted company this many a long day!"

"It is not very good, I am sorry to say, Dick old chap," was Crossley's answer.

The cab was paid and dismissed, the Earls' bags and portmanteau left at the lodge for the moment, and the two young men started to walk up to the house slowly, and under the dark shadows of the big trees.

"Did you ever know what it was to have a pain in your heart all the day long, Billy?" Thurso asked as they walked onwards. "That is what life means to me now. I wonder what sin I committed that I should have to suffer such misery as is my daily lot. A man usually turns to the thought of his home with a feeling of gladness, a sense of comfort. I am at peace only when I am away from my home. My God, Billy, what a mistake I have made! what a horrible, horrible mistake!" He broke off suddenly, and then mastered his emotion. "You sent for me; something is very wrong; what is it? Speak out, man. I have faced so much, I can face this, whatever it is."



"BILLY! AT LAST! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?" SAID ALLIE, AS SHE RAN AND CLUNG TO HIS ARM AFFECTIONATELY.

"Before I speak, Dick, I want you to give me your hand, and to say you forgive me for the words I am going to utter. If they are proved to be false and worthless, so much the better; no one could rejoice more than I shall; but if, as I fear, they tell the truth to you, hideous and awful as that truth is, I entreat you to believe I speak them only from a sense of duty, of honour, of very manhood, and that there is not a grain of malice in my heart; or, indeed, nothing but a great shadow of regret that such things should be, and should come into your life."

The two men clasped hands.

The darkness hid their faces; but each knew that, strong men as they were, their cheeks were blanched, and their lips made white and cold by the force of the horrible moment that was come to them.

"I believe you; and I forgive you if forgiveness is needed. I know you. You are my friend—your are to be my sister's husband; I trust you absolutely." Lord Thurso said this in a quick voice that was low pitched, and not very certain. "Speak at once. I can never bear suspense!"

Mr. Crossley paused an instant; then he spoke quickly. He spoke tersely and earnestly; he spoke in clear, plain words.

Thurso had given an exclamation—it was almost a cry—as he heard. When there was silence again he trembled from head to foot.

"And this is my wife! This the woman through whom my mother died unforgiving! for whom I have sacrificed the best and purest feelings of my life!"

Crossley put his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Remember, Dick, there may be a hope I am wrong. I speak only from doubt, from suspicion; it is in your hands to prove if I am right or wrong, and unless

I am very much out in my reckoning, you will be able to do so this very night."

"I am ready to do all in my power," Thurso answered, with a passion that shook his voice. "Oh! that it were in my power to put back the past, to begin all anew! Billy, I am no coward, but what you tell me to-night has taken the life out of me. I thought I knew her at her worst—vain, jealous, selfish, malicious, even dishonourable; but this I had never given her! And she is my wife!" He covered his face with his hands for an instant, then looked up suddenly. "And what has she done, that angel, that pure, sweet angel, that she should suffer such treatment at Violet's hands? Good God! it makes me shiver as I stand here to realise the danger she has been through. Alas! alas! that it should be I alone who may never dare to guard or shield her from harm that may come now or in the future!"

"Dick, dear old chap, don't go on like this; you don't know what I endure when I hear you. You know how I care for you; we have always been good pals. Believe me, I would cut off my right hand at this moment if I could serve you or have spared you in any way. I have done what I did because I felt it was duty, for your name's sake, for your honour's sake, for all, that this work should be done by you and no one else. Had it not been for that, I would have gone through with it myself, and you should have known nothing of it. But it was not possible, you see, Courage, Dick. Remember, her wrong is not yours. You have done everything an honest gentleman should ever do, and you won't hesitate now, even when you have to face the worst task a husband could be asked to undertake."

Thurso wrung the outstretched hand tightly. "I am ready," he answered, in a very quiet tone. "What shall I do?"

"Wait here till I go to the house. I will

be back directly. I want you to get upstairs without being seen. I want you to station yourself somewhere near Miss Trefusis's room." Crossley spoke very quickly. "By minute calculation. I have come to the conclusion that the poison is administered in some form or other just before Hester goes to bed. She was allowed a respite last night; that is why she is better to-day; but I am certain there will be a return of confidence, and it may be that you have arrived just in time to see the evidence of this return of confidence, and interfere in time to save Hester's life."

Billy went on, not heeding the low cry given by his companion, "I tell you frankly, Dick, that unless we step in at once that child's days on earth are not only numbered, but numbered very close now. Hold up, Dick," the young man said, putting out his hand suddenly with earnest tenderness; "do you think I don't know what this must mean to you? I feel I am sending a knife through your heart with each word I speak. But it is not the time to think of your sufferings; it is the time to act, and to act quickly."

With another grip of the hand, firm, like iron, with a momentary pause in which he saw how courageously his friend regained his composure, Billy Crossley moved away swiftly, leaving Lord Thurso standing beneath the shadow of the trees, with a desolation as of death upon his heart, a horror and a sadness too great to be put into words.

(To be continued.)

VOLCANIC ashes often travel a long distance. A remarkable shower of volcanic ashes has occurred recently in several parts of Finland. The ground in some places has been covered to the depth of nearly an inch. The phenomenon is attributed to volcanic eruptions in Iceland.



"MR. MARSH, HIM AT OPSLEIGH, BOUGHT THE GROUND," SAID THE LABOURER, POINTING OUT THE SPOT TO CLAUDE.

A TERRIBLE PROMISE.

CHAPTER IX.

There are lawyers and lawyers; it seems almost a pity that the vague general term should be applied to all whose names appear on the Rolls, since there is often as much difference in their position, income, and surroundings as between those—let us say—of a bishop and his youngest curate.

Not five minutes' walk from the office in Plum-tree Court where Paul Verity held sway, were two rooms rented by another lawyer, as great a contrast to young Paul's could be imagined.

No one had ever found Peter Wedgwood out in a dishonourable action; indeed, nothing was known against him personally, but a prejudice was abroad among his neighbours that his clients were rather shady customers.

Mr. Wedgwood reaped an ample income, but his office expenses were of the smallest. His sole factotum was a boy-clerk fresh from school, able to write a clear hand, and remember messages. This assistant was changed every year, with the result he never had time to fathom the particular nature of his employer's business. As a rule, no one called without an appointment, consequently he rarely had to wait.

The truth was, Peter Wedgwood, having gained a reputation for secrecy and caution, he was consulted on all kinds of private business; if he charged his clients highly he served them well. Beyond someone to open the door and keep guard, Mr. Wedgwood was not disturbed during confidential interviews he required no assistance; he had made some structural alterations in his offices since he rented them, with the result his own sanctum now boasted a second door

leading directly into the street, and thus clients had no need to meet their successors, for that interview over, Mr. Wedgwood courteously ushered them out by the new door, which led into a side court, and a note on his table-gong announced to the boy-clerk he was at liberty to see the next comer.

Peter Wedgwood was not far from fifty, a married man, with a gentle wife and large family. Those who knew him at home would never have recognised the wary, cautious lawyer of Elm Court. Mrs. Wedgwood had no idea of the peculiar nature of her husband's business; he never spoke of it at home—not that he was ashamed of it; he knew that if he listened to some remarkable stories, and gave his advice on peculiar subjects, why, he honourably did his best for his clients, and they had their money's worth.

He was sitting alone one October morning with an hour or two of leisure before him. His first client had been disposed of in twenty minutes; the next was not due till two o'clock; it was too early for lunch, he had read the paper in the train, actually he had nothing with which to occupy himself, and it was a positive relief when Joe Greaves—the reigning boy-clerk—appeared, to say:

"There's a gentleman wants to see you, sir; he says you don't expect him, but his business is very important."

Mr. Wedgwood's clerks were taught never to ask callers their name; it was their first lesson on coming to him.

"Show him in, Joe."

There entered a young man, seemingly of twenty-five, with a handsome, earnest face, on which rested the shadow of some heavy care. It was a nice face, and a clever one, but Peter Wedgwood's experienced eye saw that no common trouble was stamped on it just now.

"Please sit down. How can I serve you?"

The young man could hardly speak from emotion.

"Will you give me Kenneth Ford's address? Oh, sir, if you have any pity in your heart, tell me where to find him!"

Mr. Wedgwood would have declared before that day he should be horribly indignant with anyone who ventured to ask him for a client's address; but now, looking at this stranger's pale, anxious face, he could feel only pity.

"I cannot give it you," he answered, firmly. "To begin with, a lawyer may not reveal his clients' secrets; but apart from that, it is not in my power. I have done business for Mr. Ford these eighteen years, at intervals, but—I never had his address."

There was a dead silence. The last ray of hope died out of the haggard young face. Claude Disney sat in mute despair, and Mr. Wedgwood pitied him from his very heart.

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked, suddenly, and the offer almost surprised himself, it was so out of his custom to volunteer his help. "You seem—forgive me—in trouble of some kind; I have had a good deal of experience of life, and if my advice can be of any use to you it is quite at your service."

"Are you a friend of Kenneth Ford's?"

"I have met him, in all, three times; I don't particularly like what I have seen of him, still, he is—or was till lately—one of my clients, and had I known his address, it would have been dishonourable of me to give it you without his consent."

Claude felt the justice of the reply.

"I should like to tell you my story, but it is a long one. If you knew all you would understand my anxiety."

Peter Wedgwood nodded.

"I can give you till two o'clock."

Your confidence will be sacred. The walls of this room are sound-proof, and no word spoken here can reach beyond."

"Do you remember the name of Madame Le Comte, a widow, living in Paris?"

"One moment," interrupted Mr. Wedgwood, "it will save you time if I tell you first all I know about her. For seven or eight years I forwarded, at Mr. Ford's wish, eighty pounds a year to Madame Le Comte. I sent it every August. When my client returned from abroad he took this duty on himself, but the widow's receipts still came here. Last August she wrote to me asking why the money had ceased, and I referred her to Mr. Ford, subsequently three or four letters—the latter, I believe—came here in rapid succession for Mr. Ford. He was then staying in London, and called for them every day."

"And when did you see him last?"

"I am coming to that. Three weeks ago last Monday—that is, on the tenth of September—he came here and said his business with Madame Le Comte was now at an end, and he should have no further need for my services; he paid me what was owing, and when we parted I quite understood I had seen the last of Kenneth Ford."

"The tenth of September! Oh, heavens!"

"That date has some peculiar association for you?"

"Yes. My name is Disney, Mr. Wedgwood, I am assistant to my uncle, Dr. Bolton, who practises in Paris; I ought to have told you this before."

"No 'ought' about it," replied the lawyer, "but I am glad to know it, for I expect that you must be the son of my old school-fellow, Edgar Disney. I know he left one boy, who was brought up by some relations in France."

"My father's name was Edgar."

"Well, he and I were sworn friends, so his son may trust me fully."

"I ask nothing better," and poor Claude breathed a sigh of relief. "I should mention my uncle, Dr. Bolton, has known Madame Le Comte for years, and it was he who advised her to write to you."

"The eighty pounds a year was a provision for her grandchild, Nora Beatrice Charles, I believe?"

"For her grandchildren, Nora and Beatrice, they are twins. Heaven only knows if I ought not to say 'were.'"

"And Mr. Ford was a relation?"

"Their father's first cousin."

"And then Claude told Mr. Wedgwood the whole story of Mrs. Masterton's situation, and how Nora had started so hopefully on that fatal tenth of September."

"The very day on which Mr. Ford told you his business with Madame Le Comte was finished; Nora left us for England. He was to meet her at Charing Cross the following morning, and escort her to Mrs. Masterton's. Mr. Wedgwood, from the hour we said good-bye to Nora at the Paris station we have heard nothing of her."

The lawyer started.

"But why, in the name of goodness, have you wasted all this time? She would have been in England three weeks yesterday. You ought to have made inquiries much sooner."

"I know"—there was something almost pathetic in the confession—"we have blundered horribly, but we did it for the best. We were terribly handicapped by not having Mrs. Masterton's address, and other things were against us. Madame Le Comte died four days after Nora left us; Beatrice—the twin sister—broken down by the anguish of suspense and the shock of her grandmother's death, was seized with brain fever. Can't you understand Mr. Wedgwood, how we were placed? Before we grew positively alarmed at Nora's silence,

before the delay of posts—supposing she had gone to some remote part of England—ceased to explain it, the two nearest to her were laid aside—one for ever, and the other, at least, for weeks. Who was to come over and make inquiries? My aunt was nursing Beatrice, and could not leave her, my uncle was tied to his practice, and, you see, all the while we knew that Mr. Ford was our lost one's next of kin. I was her fiancé; but while she was a minor I could not have disputed her guardianship with him; it was only when three letters to Mr. Ford, each more urgent than its predecessor, were left unanswered that I resolved to come to England. I told my uncle I was Nora's promised husband, and it was my right. I don't care if I offend Mr. Ford so deeply that he never gives either of the twins a farthing; I will work for them both, but I will never rest until I find Nora!"

"On one point I can satisfy you," said Peter Wedgwood, gravely; "Mr. Ford never had your letters."

"Then where are they?"

"Here. When I was Mr. Ford's adviser it was arranged whenever a letter awaited him I should deliver it in the 'Morning Post,' under a cypher we agreed on. I felt positive when he went away on the tenth of September I should have no more visits from him, but I advertised each of those letters. He took no notice, the letters are still undelivered, and I can show them to you."

Claude shook his head. He could not have borne the sight of those letters, remembering the mingled hopes and fears with which they had been sent.

"You know the world and its ways," said the poor young fellow, simply, "will you tell me in plain words what you think?"

"I think it looks black. If the girl were alive and well she would have written herself; had there been an accident to the train or steamer, so that she did not meet her cousin, he would have written to ask the reason. I should say they did meet, and that, for reasons of his own, he was keeping her apart from her family."

"But what reasons?"

Wedgwood answered the question by another.

"Have you ever heard of this Mr. Ford, apart from Madame Le Comte's business? Did you ever hear him mentioned?"

"Never—stay, though, yes, my uncle attended a young clergyman this very last spring who had been very intimate with Kenneth Ford in India, and praised him very highly."

"Ah! Did he by any chance mention Mr. Ford's age?"

"No, but he spoke of him as a far younger man than we had fancied him."

"Now, Mr. Disney, as Kenneth Ford was my client, perhaps I ought not to tell you this, but for your father's sake I want to prevent your starting on a wrong track. I will stake my professional reputation on the opinion I am giving you: either there are two Kenneth Fords, or the man who corresponded with Madame Le Comte under that name had no right to it."

"Why?"

"Last year I was spending my summer holiday in Northshire, on the coast. Amongst other places, we made excursions to Chatterly, a very pretty little village inland. A Mr. Kenneth Ford was living there with his widowed mother, and oddly enough, someone in our party introduced me to him. He was not my client, but a perfect stranger. I believe I should have known my man under any disguise, but this gentleman was quite different. He was a head too tall, for one thing, then he was just a frank, intelligent Englishman, with that cordiality of manner

people pick up when they have lived any time abroad; he was full of his Indian experiences, and I have no doubt he was the man your uncle's patient knew so well."

"Probably, but—"

"Wait a moment. I had my curiosity, as you might have, and I put the question point-blank: 'Have you a namesake, Mr. Ford?' 'Do you mean a namesake or a double?' he replied. 'I dare say there are half a dozen Kenneth Fords scattered about the world, but I hope none of them are exactly like me. I should not relish a counterpart.' Perhaps I looked puzzled, for he added, 'There's no other Kenneth Ford in our family, for my father, my grandfather, and myself were all only sons.'"

"Was he like your client?"

"Not the least in the world; he was a head too tall, and a broad-shouldered, finely made man. My client was under-sized, with a slouching figure and a bad walk, the most striking things about him were his hair and beard, both were snow white and very long; they gave him almost a patriarchal aspect."

Claude looked in despair.

"It seems a sea of difficulties," he cried. "I told my uncle when once I was in England it would be easy to find my darling, and now that I am here, even the first step, questioning the man who took her away, seems hopeless."

"You may be sure of one thing," said Peter Wedgwood, "Kenneth Ford, of Salton, Northshire, is not the man. To begin with, he would have been a mere lad of twenty or so when the allowance to Madame Le Comte began, and I happen to know that till quite recently he was a poor man, and with the utmost goodwill could not have paid anyone an income of eighty pounds a year."

"But if we believe the name was assumed, things look very bad."

"Aye!"

"You are keeping something back," cried Claude, suddenly. "Mr. Wedgwood, I implore you, give me all the help you can. Think what my darling may be suffering all this weary time!"

The elder man looked deeply moved.

"I was only thinking that soon after Kenneth Ford last called here, I read a description in the papers that fitted him to the life. It was of a man, not known to have done any harm, but who travelled from London to York with a young girl who, some hours later, was found dead in the train. I can't say people actually suspected her companion of killing her; but, naturally, they wanted to find him."

Claude's dark eyes sought the lawyer's face, asking as plainly as any words:

"Was that girl Nora?"

"I don't know, my poor fellow. I wish I did," said Wedgwood, kindly; "only I thought I'd tell you. The papers took very little notice of the case; not half so much as they generally do of such mysteries. You see it happened in a remote part of England, and there was an East End murder occupying public attention at the same time. I'll give you the account to read, and you can see what you think. The poor girl certainly went to Northshire on the eleventh of September, and from no one coming forward to identify her, she seems to have been a stranger in England."

From a drawer he took two local Northshire papers, one contained the opening of the inquest on the unknown girl found dead at Salton Railway Station; the other gave the conclusion and the finding of the jury.

Peter Wedgwood turned his back deliberately on the poor young fellow till he had finished.

"There can be no doubt," said Claude, brokenly; "that is just what she wore, and

she was going to The Firs; it was the name of Mrs. Masterton's house. Oh! Mr. Wedgwood, why was she cut off in her youth and innocence? What harm had she ever done Kenneth Ford that he should take her life?"

"If that girl was Mademoiselle Charles, it is part of a deep-laid scheme. The man who pretended to be Kenneth Ford, contrived that she should be found dead near the home of the real Kenneth Ford, so that suspicion should fall on him. Oh, he was a clever fellow," said the lawyer, bitterly. "He calculated the poor child's friends would come to England to seek her at Mr. Ford's hands; he hoped their suspicions would fall on an innocent man. Only one thing has saved that pleasant fellow I met in Northshire from a very painful experience—he was at home at the time of the tragedy."

"I—I don't quite understand."

"If Mademoiselle Charles reached England on Tuesday morning, and went on by the ten o'clock train from King's Cross to the North, it would be impossible for her to see or speak to a man who was actually waiting on the Salton platform when the train came in."

Claude Disney quite agreed.

"It looks to me as though Kenneth Ford—the true one—had some bitter enemy who had stolen his name to do him an ill turn."

"And who stole it eighteen years ago," put in the lawyer. "This is no sudden yielding to temptation; unless I am mistaken, that poor child's fate was planned out long ago."

"There is no clue," said Claude, passionately; "but I shall make it my life's work to find out the truth."

"You must do nothing openly."

"Why not?" cried Claude, indignantly. "I mean to go down to Salton this very day; I shall identify the unknown stranger as Nora Charles; I shall—"

"You will ruin everything if you ever show your face in Northshire."

"But—"

"Listen to me," and Peter Wedgwood brought down his fist on the table with a thump. "Of course, you want to avenge your fiancée, but you must have some pity on her sister."

"I am very fond of Beatrice, but she will be as anxious for revenge as I am."

"Listen. The false Kenneth Ford has shown already he does not stick at much. Assuming for a moment he was the old gentleman who travelled from King's Cross to York with Mademoiselle Charles, we have every reason to believe he presented her with the poisoned streetmeats—"

"He murdered her!"

"If you prefer it. He had no knowledge of her twin sister; he always believed Madame Le Comte had but one grandchild."

"I know the old lady always meant to correct the mistake, but she was not a good letter-writer, and I suppose she put off the explanation."

"For which the surviving twin may be thankful. Once let that villain know his victim has left a sister, and he will be at his tricks again. Now, Mr. Disney, if you rush down to Salton, by Friday the newspapers will publish the touching story of the twin sisters, and our old gentleman, with the patriarchal beard—cleverly got up under some fresh disguise—will be off to Paris to try his arts on Miss Beatrice."

"But I can't sit still and do nothing, while my darling lies in her dishonoured grave."

"It is not dishonoured, but in one of the loveliest churchyards in England. She was buried there at the expense of a rich colonist, who could not bear for her to rest in a pauper's grave. I don't want you to do nothing; but if you ever hope to avenge

your fiancée, you must keep away from Salton, and not divulge the dead girl's name at present."

"Then that villain will get off scot free."

"No, he won't. Once discover his true name, and then get a warrant for his apprehension on a charge of wilful murder; but don't stir in the business till you do this, for he's a dangerous man, unless you can rob him of his fangs."

"And I must go back to France and leave the mystery unsolved. If only I were rich, and could pay detectives to take up the case!"

"My dear fellow, you may be sure most detectives have their eye on it already. Mr. Marsh, of Salton, has offered a reward of a hundred pounds for information leading to the discovery of the murder."

"I can't make out why he did it; she could not have harmed him."

"Her life may have stood between him and fortune. He may have enjoyed wealth rightly hers, while he pensioned her off with a small pittance."

"Madame Le Comte always said her son-in-law came of a good family."

"Well, we will solve the mystery some day; it will be in time to give Miss Beatrice her rights. My own opinion is that the villain lives near Salton."

Claude shuddered.

"Surely not; he wouldn't have brought her to die near his own home. He would want to forget his crime, not to have her grave always in his sight."

"Ah, but think of his perfect knowledge of the time and place; he selected the one train in the day which did not oblige passengers to change at Wilmington, then he arranged the tragedy for a day when the real Mr. Ford might be expected to be in London. I myself expected to meet him at an annual public dinner, which he had engaged to attend; but a friend's arrival a day sooner than invited made him give it up. All this I say points to the idea the guilty man lives in Northshire, and is among Kenneth Ford's intimates."

"Do you think he had a confederate?"

The lawyer paused a moment.

"I can't say. Someone must have written the letter purporting to come from Mrs. Masterton. He would hardly risk sending it in his own hand, disguised."

"It was a woman's hand—a very pretty feminine hand."

"The weak point in our theory," said Mr. Wedgwood, thoughtfully, "is, that it came out at the inquest, the old gentleman did not reach King's Cross with the dead girl. Now I should not have thought he would let her out of his sight."

"There would be just over three hours between her getting to Charing Cross and starting again," replied Claude. "She must surely have breakfasted somewhere, and—what did he do with her luggage?"

"I never thought of that; did she much?"

"One large trunk, and a small travelling box. I would swear to either anywhere. Madame Le Comte was so anxious Nora should go to England well provided; and my aunt, who is the kindest of women, gave her the trunk. It was of black leather with the initials 'N. C.' in white."

"He must have had a confederate then," said Peter Wedgwood; "and it was a woman."

"How can you tell?"

"It's easy, when one's used to strange cases. The letter from The Firs was written by a woman. If he left Nora for a few minutes, he would not have left her alone, or confided her to the care of a strange man. So there again he needed feminine aid. Most probably he trusted his ally very little,

but, to a small extent a woman must have been in his confidence."

"The clue is lost at York. The witnesses at the inquest declared they saw the old gentleman leave the train at York," said Claude Disney.

"Will you take the advice of a man old enough to be your father, and who was that father's friend? Go back to Paris; try and devote yourself to your profession, and leave me to deal with this mystery. I have solved harder cases in my time."

"But—"

"You think I cannot have your strong interest in the matter?"

Claude interrupted him.

"I meant it would cost time and trouble, and aid like yours is valuable. I should never be able to recompense you as you ought to be recompensed."

Peter Wedgwood smiled.

"I am a rich man, my boy; and the researches I shall make will cost me nothing but a little of my time. I feel bound, in common justice, to do my best for you, since my office has been used by this villain as an address for the letters which brought your Nora into his power. He has deceived me, and I thought I was too old an hand to be taken in. I don't promise you to find out his name this month, or next; it will be a work of time, for with such an arch scoundrel one must proceed cautiously. But leave the matter in my hands, and I pledge my honour that sooner or later I will tell you not only the real name of 'Kenneth Ford,' but his motive in taking the life of that poor child."

And Claude thanked the great lawyer, and accepted his offer, knowing that the task could not be in abler hands. One consolation he gave himself, and only one. He went down by the evening mail to Wilmington, slept there, and tramped over to Chatterly the next day. He could not have gone to Salton Station and passed through the waiting-room where his Nora had been laid without betraying something.

It was still mild weather, and a sprinkling of tourists were still to be seen, and a good many of them had visited Chatterly churchyard, which was common to that village and Salton, from curiosity to see the grave of the murdered girl, so Claude might be taken for one of these idle sightseers.

There was no need to ask for the spot; an old man moving the grass directed him to it as a matter of course; as though no stranger could want to see anything else.

"Mr. Marsh, him at Capeleigh, bought the ground," said the old labourer, "and he's going to put up a stone later on. There's not a day but someone brings flowers, 'till the grave's like a picture. You see, sir, she was but a child, and it seemed lonely for her to lie here, away from her kith and kin; but no one could have a prettier spot."

Claude dared not linger to pour out his grief. He stood for one moment in prayer, beside his darling's grave, he took a tiny, half-open rosebud from a wreath of rich late flowers lying near the foot, and then he went away, to return to France with his blighted hopes and aching heart.

CHAPTER X.

Kenneth Ford was astonished at Lady Chatterly's presence of mind in her husband's sudden illness. Coming after their recent conversation, the Earl's seizure was in itself terrifying; but considering his last conscious words, "I saw your brother's ghost in the shrubbery!" Kenneth quite expected his cousin's wife to go into hysterics, or faint away, but Gertrude was perfectly calm,

Whiter even than before, her face looked almost death-like, but her presence of mind never failed. She looked at Mr. Ford appealingly.

"We must send for the doctor; please tell the groom."

Restored to action by her request, Kenneth pealed the bell.

"Your master has been taken ill," he said to old Jordan, "send at once for Dr. Bardon; and ask the groom to call coming back at the Lane House, and tell my mother I shall not be home to dinner."

Gertrude looked at him gratefully.

"I was afraid to ask you to stay lest your mother should be frightened."

"She will understand. I know something of illness, and I may be of some use to you. It is impossible to take him upstairs; could you have a bed made up in one of the rooms on this floor?"

"There is a bed in Reginald's study," said Lady Chatterly; "it is a fancy of his to have it ready in case he is kept up late writing. He does not use it once a month, but it is always prepared."

Enter Mrs. Jordan, to offer her services. Lady Chatterly went to the study to see that all was in readiness; Jordan, who had known Kenneth Ford from a child, indulged herself in plain speaking.

"I've expected this for days, sir. The master has just worn himself out. Ever since he came back from London he has been up till long past midnight, and down again by five; no human creature could stand it!"

"I suppose the preparations for going away have given him a great deal to do."

"I don't think it's that, sir. He's seemed too restless to sleep. I only hope the doctor may be able to cure him, for he's been breaking down this long time."

"Lady Chatterly says there is a bed in his study."

"Yes, sir. No one ever goes into the room but himself. I suppose it doesn't matter, but it's the first time I ever heard of such a thing."

It flashed across Kenneth then that the Earl always saw his special visitors in the library; they were never invited into his own den.

"I believe I could carry him, with your husband's help," said Mr. Ford. "If you can get him to bed before the doctor comes, it will be so much gained."

So when, an hour later, Dr. Bardon drove up, Kenneth Ford took him straight into the study, where the Earl was already in bed. The doctor examined his patient carefully, but made no attempt to try the effect of restoratives. He signed to Kenneth to follow him from the room, where they left the housekeeper on guard.

The Countess met them on the threshold.

"I will come to you in two minutes, Lady Chatterly," said the old doctor, frankly, "but I must ask Mr. Ford one or two medical questions first."

Gertrude retreated, and the two men passed into the library, but the questions were so long in coming Kenneth grew alarmed.

"What's wrong, Bardon? Please speak out; Chatterly and I are not so much attached that you need fear alarming me."

"No, but you are attached to the name he bears," said the doctor, gravely. "Is it possible, Mr. Ford, that you have no idea what is the matter with your cousin?"

"I fancied it was like the beginning of brain fever. He staggered into the drawing-room, and told his wife he had seen her brother's ghost. No man in his senses would say that."

"And Lady Chatterly, has she noticed anything strange in her husband?"

"Yes. She was asking me this afternoon

whether there had ever been insanity in the family; she thought Chatterly's manner so odd."

"Well, it's a merciful name for it to call it insanity, but the plain English is—drunk!"

"What?" Mr. Ford almost jumped out of his chair with amazement. "Why, doctor, you must be dreaming. Chatterly is the most abstemious of men!"

"As a rule. You are nearly ten years your cousin's junior, Mr. Ford, your memory can't go back as far as mine."

"For Heaven's sake, speak plainly!"

"I was assistant to my father at the time of your cousin's birth. The Countess was exceedingly ill, and a wet nurse had to be procured. For some time she gave every satisfaction, then she was attacked by a strange illness. My father was called in, and recognised it as delirium tremens! It was discovered later that the woman had been a hard drinker for years, though she was only thirty."

"And you think it affected Reginald?"

"I am positive of it! Abstemious to a degree as a rule, at times he drinks harder than an inveterate drunkard; he does not give way to these excesses often, sometimes there are years between his outbreaks, and the fact that he can drink a very great amount before it takes effect on him, has made it easier to conceal it. His father knew of the fatal weakness; I was called in to attend his youngest son by him two or three times; the last was when his brother's death made him the heir; he had such an attack of delirium tremens then I thought he would have died."

"And since his marriage?"

"I only know of two outbreaks, the first after his boy's death, the second this present one."

"But what is to be done? The bare knowledge of such a thing is enough to kill Lady Chatterly."

"Jordan and his wife know the truth," said the doctor.

Kenneth bit his lips. Even for old and tried servants to know the family skeleton hurt his pride.

"You think they will be able to manage?"

"Yes. I shall tell the Countess her presence would be exciting, and that she must leave her husband to the Jordans' care. The bout won't last long; in a week or ten days he'll be able to start on this foreign tour."

"Alone—with his wife?"

"I don't wonder at your horror; it makes even me, an old man of seventy turned, indignant to think of her being tied to such a man."

"Surely if she knew the truth she would leave him?"

"How could she?"

"Do you mean money? I believe she'd work her fingers to the bone to keep herself and her child rather than stay with him, if she knew the truth."

"My dear Mr. Ford, you forget—the child."

"No I don't. Chatterly hates Phillis."

"But he does not hate his wife: the law gives him the possession of Lady Phillis, since she is past seven years old. If his wife attempted to leave him Lord Chatterly would threaten to deprive her of her child."

"Heaven help her," said Kenneth, sadly, "for it seems to me no one on earth can!"

(To be continued.)

It has been estimated that if each fly hatched should live to be four years of age, at the end of that time they would form a solid mass around the earth, extending to a height of fifty miles, or about the estimated thickness of our atmosphere.

ADA GRAY'S ORDEAL.

—3—

CHAPTER XXVII.—(continued.)

He was silent for many minutes, contemplating the horror of the situation, and all the time she sat there without either moving or speaking, gazing mutely at the hand that covered his eyes.

He removed it at last and looked at her, a long look that would have driven any other woman under heaven to pity, but it only seemed to arouse her love to greater desperation.

"Winifred," he said, slowly, pausing between his words as a man does when he is forcing himself to speak under most violent effort, "I am going to do what you ask. I want you to understand that there is no love in the matter, nor ever can be. I simply don't want to see you turned upon the world without a friend in it. There would be nothing in life for you under those circumstances but to return to the old life from which you seem to be trying to extricate yourself. You can never, under any circumstances that could arise, be my wife again, but you shall be my most unfortunate sister, if you will, to be guarded and cared for until such time as you may break your promise to me again."

She touched his hand with her lips, never indicating by her caress anything of the wild passion that was consuming her very soul.

"And you will take me away?" she whispered, allowing her gratitude to show itself in her voice.

"I will take you away. It is better, much better, that we neither of us should remain here for the present."

She bowed her head upon his knee with an affectation of humility, lest he should read the triumphant expression of her face aright.

"How shall I ever prove my gratitude?" she murmured.

"By being what you ought to be—an honest woman from to-day."

She arose and placed her hand upon his head.

"I will try," she whispered. "So help me Heaven, I will try to be everything that you could wish me!"

He did not even hear her last remark. His thoughts had flown to other subjects. He looked at his watch hurriedly.

"Not here yet!" he exclaimed.

He sprang up, and going into the hall, rang the messenger-call, then went to a little escritoire at the back of the room and wrote hurriedly, while Winifred looked over his shoulder and read:

"Oscar Gray, Esq.

"Dear Sir,—The greatest possible danger threatens your daughter. Only you can save her. For the love of Heaven go at once to the address which I shall inclose, and save her from the man who is about to betray her into a false marriage. He is James Clarke, and he has not the right to marry her, being a married man already with a living wife. Don't lose a moment. I had hoped for another avenue of escape, but it is growing late, and I dare not wait longer. Very truly yours,

"ARTHUR CLINTON."

He inclosed the address to which he had referred, then sealed the note as the messenger rang the bell.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ada Gray stood before that person whom she supposed to be a clergyman, as stonily, as if she had been carved from marble. Not

a muscle of her face moved, not an atom of emotion was visible in her manner.

She had stood in the presence of her dead mother with the same calm upon her in those old days when that mother had been the dearest thing that life held for her; and Jane, her maid, remembered that fact as she stood there looking on in mute astonishment.

And Darcy Glenham played his dastardly part to perfection. Nothing could have been more ministerial than his air as he stood there congratulating the bride, even before that loathsome ceremony had been performed, but speaking his words with a quiet intensity that would have carried great weight to a woman capable of understanding more than Ada was at that moment.

He took her hand and held it gently.

"I have known Mr. Clarke intimately for years," he said, "and I am not surprised that he has won your heart. I am sure that he will make you very happy, and I pray Heaven's blessing upon your union in advance."

And Heaven sent down no thunder-bolt to strike both the villains down there at the feet of Innocence and purity.

She replied by never a word, but that was of small moment to either of them. Clarke was in haste to have the ceremony performed, in order that there might be no interruption, and Darcy Glenham was equally anxious to have it over and be well out of it.

Not that he objected to the part he was playing. On the contrary, he considered it one of the greatest of larks, and it fired his blood with pleasure; but there was always some danger of detection, and he knew full well that such detection would place him in a position that he was not anxious to occupy.

Therefore, when he received the signal from Clarke to go on, he did so without regret.

Once Jane stepped forward and touched her mistress's dress pleadingly, but for some reason—she could not have explained what—she dared not speak.

Ada turned and looked at her. But that was all; still, it was enough. The faithful maid understood, and still she dared not speak. She knew that her mistress was acting under some compulsion, though she could not have told what, and a great pity filled her heart. She was powerless in the presence of those two friends. She seemed to know intuitively the danger that threatened her beloved one, and yet there was nothing that she could do, and she listened to that awful mockery they called a ceremony with a fear at her heart that was hideous.

And Darcy Glenham went through with it all. Nothing was omitted that could make it appear real, even to the asking of the blessing of Heaven upon it at the end, and still no message from Heaven came.

It was all done at last, and Ada Gray was pronounced Clarke's wife.

A great heaving sigh escaped her as she heard herself called by his name for the first time. A terrible faintness came over her, and unconsciousness was threatened, but she rallied under the pressure of Jane's kindly arm.

Clarke left the room for a moment with his friend, and in his absence Jane sprang forward, catching her mistress about the waist with the freedom of a privileged friend.

"What have you done it for, Miss Ada?" she cried, breathlessly.

"I don't know," answered the girl, dully.

"You don't love him?"

"No!"

She scarcely realized what she was saying until the words were spoken; then she would

have given worlds to have recalled them, but it was eternally too late.

A moment afterwards Clarke came into the room, and all possibility of conversation was at an end between them. Jane saw that, and not understanding that any immediate steps were to be taken, she slipped away, determined that something should be done to save her mistress, let the cost be what it would.

She trusted to neither of the two men. She felt, without knowing why, that some dreadful calamity had befallen Ada, and she had resolved that she would thwart the men who had conceived the plot.

She had not decided upon anything definitely when she ran from the house and into the street, but a plan came to her then, and she ran swiftly in the direction of Arthur Clinton's house.

She remembered its exact location from having been there upon that memorable night with Ada; and she did not pause for breath, but ran with the fleetness of a deer.

In the meantime Clarke had realized that it was as well for him to take advantage of her absence, as it was by no means his intention that she should go with them to the new quarters that he had already telegraphed to engage. He had occupied the same rooms under similar circumstances before, and he knew that they were safe enough for the purposes that he had in view.

As soon as Jane had left the room he took Ada in his arms with all the tenderness that a young husband is expected to show; but the very fact of the ceremony seemed to fill her with a horror of him that she had not known before.

She shrank from him, and would have cried out in her agony at the humiliation of a caress from him, but that she suddenly remembered his right, and strove to bear it in silence. He was not slow to see how it had affected her, and wisely refrained from exerting his prerogative.

"My darling!" he said to her, very gently, "I know that it is hardly the thing to propose to you so soon after a marriage, but you seem weak and faint. I believe the air would do you good. Won't you come for a little drive with me?"

She would have done anything to have prevented being alone with him, and with an alacrity that she would have believed herself incapable of half an hour before, she arose and even smiled.

"With pleasure," she answered, the excitement through which she had gone making itself heard in her voice.

She put on her hat quickly, slipped into her jacket without allowing Clarke to assist her, and joined him.

He did not offer to kiss her, for which she thanked him from the bottom of her soul, but he slipped his hand through her arm and led her down the stairs.

A carriage waited in front of the door, and into it he lifted her, following and closing the door, with no instructions to the coachman.

Ada looked back at the house she had left with a curious sensation, an undefined foreboding of the awful time that was to come—looked back, but never realized that she had entered and left it for the last time.

CHAPTER XXIX.

All the life and energy seemed to be as completely eradicated from Ada's nature as if they had never existed. She leaned back in the carriage, pale, cold, and still, as if death were upon her. She did not speak. She seemed, in fact, not to be even thinking.

She had no more idea of the direction they were following than if she had been a woman of wood who sat there.

That was exactly as Clarke desired, and he remained in absolute quiet lest he should interrupt the mood that was upon her. Other women, whom he had treated in the same dastardly way, had loved him—were willing to do anything, go anywhere that he might indicate; but he knew that he was less to this one than the coachman upon the box.

Perhaps it was that very fact which fascinated him into being madly in love with her, for certain it was that he did love her more than any of the others, and he proposed to allow no obstacle to come between them. It seemed to him that annihilation would have been easy had such a thing even been attempted by any one.

It was becoming a mania with him, and he knew it. The greater opposition that he met with upon her part, the greater became his desire for full possession. He had determined that he would make her love him. He was determined that she should feel toward him exactly as he felt toward her, and he realised that in order to accomplish that he must take the greatest possible care.

He knew that her nature was utterly different from any of those others with whom he had come in contact. He saw that he must humour her whims, accede to her caprices.

He felt that he could afford to take time to do all that now, as she believed herself his wife, irretrievably bound to him, and he resolved that he would not force her inclination in any way—at least, not yet.

He felt that in that way alone could he hope to win her, knowing that she would appreciate his sacrifices to the last degree.

He watched her in silence, feeling every moment that she would arouse from the lethargy that was upon her; but they were on a country road before she became aware of her surroundings at all. Then she glanced about her with a start, as one sometimes does on being aroused from a sound sleep.

"I beg your pardon," she stammered, her face growing a trifle flushed. "I must have been a most intensely stupid companion. I entirely forgot myself—and you. Where are we?"

He smiled at her indulgently as he replied:

"We are going to see the new home that I have provided for you until we can get out of England. I was going to propose to you, dear, that you should remain here. You are utterly worn out, and there is no use in your taking this long drive again. The country air will do you a world of good, and you can rest. I will go back this evening and bring your maid. She can fetch down what you need, and to-morrow she can make what preparations you may require for our trip. To drive back would tire you unutterably. What do you say?"

She was intensely pleased with his manner toward her, grateful that he had not forced upon her any of those caresses that a young husband has the right to offer, and striving with all her might to warm her voice into something like interest, she answered:

"Let it be as you desire. I fancy it might be pleasanter for me to remain. Shall you return to town this evening?"

There was more eagerness than she was aware of in the question, and he winced under it. Her indifference was beginning to hurt him, but he answered without a shade of bitterness in his tone:

"I shall be compelled to do so, because there are things that you will require. Ada, there are some things that are necessary that we should say to each other, dear, though I confess that it is a painful subject to me

just now. I can't shrink from things, however, because they are painful, and I want you to forgive me in advance for anything in it that you may not quite understand. I don't think you love me, dear, quite so much, as you or I would desire. There! Don't interrupt me, my darling. I am not going to find fault with you—not in the very least. Love is something which can only be won, and never forced. You will say that you told me frankly before you became my wife that you did not love me, and you would be right. Some day you will learn to love me as I yearn to have you do. Some day, dear, though you may not believe it now, you will come to me of your own accord and give yourself to me, but until such time as you can do that, you are the same girl that you were yesterday. You have no coercion to fear from me. Of course, I do not desire that any one should know of this arrangement between us, because, naturally, it would not be one that would meet with the commendation of my friends or the world. In fact, I am sufficient of a coward to be ashamed of the fact, and therefore I shall ask you to allow matters to appear between us as if we were in reality husband and wife; but I shall ask nothing of you that a sister could not yield to me until such time as you shall give yourself to me of your own accord. You will trust me, Ada?"

She lifted her eyes to his face, while the silent tears poured over her pale cheeks.

"You are a noble man, a generous friend," she answered, brokenly. "I don't know how I have deserved such kindness and consideration, but I shall try to show you that I am not ungrateful."

She leaned over and touched his hand with her lips, and he returned the caress with as light a kiss upon her brow.

They drove on in silence after that. He saw perfectly the impression that he had made, and did not wish to detract from it by any words. She was thinking of what he had said of his generosity, and he knew it and could already see the difference in her manner, even silent as she was to him.

Neither of them spoke again until the carriage paused before a long, low-roofed, old-fashioned farm-house; then he lifted her from the vehicle with a quiet tenderness that touched her.

The door opened at once and a woman appeared. Ada did not observe her particularly, as she was inoffensive-looking and non-descript, but allowed herself to be led to the rooms that she was to occupy with her new husband.

But for that conversation in the carriage, that thought would have filled her with a wild horror that would have been insupportable, but now she felt rather pleased with the arrangement of everything. The home-like air and quiet soothed her, and she turned to him with a smile brighter than any he had ever seen upon her face.

"It is very, sweet—very lovely," she said to him gently. "Thank you a thousand times for all the trouble that you have taken for me. I am not worthy of all your love, but I pray that it may not always remain so. I pray that I may soon love you as you deserve to be loved. Only be patient, and the time will come."

"I am sure of it," he answered, taking her in his arms and kissing her without any exhibition of passion.

She did not shrink from him then, and he realised it with a thrill of exultation. He tried not to allow her to see it, however, and his voice was very quiet as he said:

"I am going back with the carriage now. You will find books and a piano in the next room. I hope you will not be lonely."

"No, I shall not. What time shall you return?"

"It is impossible to say, but I shall not be late."

He did not kiss her again before leaving her, but as the door closed upon him, he turned and looked back with a smile upon his lips.

"I shall win, my beautiful icicle," he said, below his breath. "I made the wisest speech possible to you, my shy bird, and it has done its work. You are in my power, and I can afford to wait a few weeks in order that I may have everything as I would wish it. You will love me yet as passionately as I love you, and then, my dear, perhaps your turn will come!"

He went down the stairs and out at the door, pausing for a moment before stepping again into the carriage to say a word to the woman who had admitted them.

"Don't allow her to suspect that she is watched," he said, hurriedly; "but don't lose sight of her. I shall return early."

Ada, from the window above, watched him enter the carriage and drive away, unable to repress a sigh of relief, though she was loth to acknowledge it even to herself after his great generosity, as she termed it; then she glanced about her.

The air of the house, large and roomy though it was, somehow seemed to oppress her, and feeling glad to be alone in the great, free country, she slipped out at the door, down the stairs, and out on to the lawn.

The old feeling of her early, happy girlhood seemed to be born in her again. The sensation was so new after the excitement and torture through which she had gone during the last few weeks, that she wanted to keep it, and she walked away down the country road in the direction of the sea.

She could hear its roar in the distance, and she wanted to be beside it, to let its grandeur get into her soul once more.

She was walking rapidly, and was utterly unconscious of the proximity of anyone, until she felt a heavy hand upon her arm, and saw a white, scared face looking earnestly into her own.

"What are you doing down here, Miss Gray?" a hoarse voice cried, making no apology for the questioning.

"Is it you, Miss Craven?" asked Ada, when she had sufficiently recovered from her surprise to speak. "I am afraid I am very silly, but you frightened me."

"But what are you doing here?" persisted Dot. "For the love of Heaven, speak quickly!"

Something in her manner caused Ada to shiver. She did not dare disobey the command in that fierce tone, and unable to understand her own sensations, she replied:

"I have come to stay for a few days before we go abroad. I was married this morning to Mr. John Clarke."

Dot shrank back, her hand falling from the girl's arm.

"Married!" she gasped. "Good Heaven! It can't be true! I thought they would save you from that!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that John Clarke is married already; that he has no right to take either you or any other woman his wife!"

that she had not the right to distrust the man whom she had sworn to honour and obey because of the first word of opprobrium that had touched his name.

She did not shiver or tremble, but stood there like a cast-iron thing, looking at the woman who had told her that dreadful thing about the man whom she had married; then, in a voice that sounded frozen, she exclaimed:

"You don't know what you are talking about. You can't know what you are talking about. I was married to him but a few short hours ago."

"Married!" exclaimed Dot, passionately. "It was the blackest, bitterest, most shameful mockery that Heaven ever witnessed! How many women do you suppose he has treated in the same dastardly way? Only Heaven and John Clarke's own foul conscience could answer that. There never lived a—"

"Hush!" cried Ada, drawing herself up and striving to speak with dignity. "You have not the right to speak to me like that, and I have not the right to listen. What proof have you of what you say?"

For a moment Dot was silent. A flush of shame had overspread her face, and her eyes were cast upon the ground.

"You see, you have done very wrong," said Ada, quietly. "I don't know what your motive can have been, but—"

"Then listen while I tell you!" cried Dot, lifting her eyes appealingly. "It is to save you from the same cursed fate that I have suffered at his hands. I have been through this same wretched farce through which you are now passing. I have lived in the house over there which now shelters you as the wife of the man you believe to be your husband. I loved and trusted him as I would not have loved and trusted an angel fresh from Heaven. A woman came to me and told me the same things that I am saying to you now, but I would not listen. He said they were false, and I would have sworn that they were untrue. I was young then, and, men said, beautiful. For more than a year I lived in a fool's paradise—I adored, I worshipped him—and then he met a new fancy, and I was forgotten. It was then I learned his true nature, but too late to save myself the bitterest suffering that woman ever endured. Oh, Heaven! how can I tell even you of it? But I must, in order that I may save you from the same anguish. I was a mother!"

Ada threw out her hand, and shrank back a trifle. Dot caught it in her own, and leaned forward, her breath half-scorching the young girl's cheek.

"He told me," she continued, wildly, "that he was married. He gave me the hideous proof that what he said was true. I don't know why I did not die. Perhaps it was the thought of my baby that kept me alive. Well, I went to London, and tried to conceal my awful shame. The little one was called my sister, and believed herself to be to this day. She was deprived of strength, of activity. She lies to-day upon her couch, a hopeless cripple. The saddest matters went from bad to worse, until there was nothing left; and I accepted the position where I met you, on the staff of 'The Mercury.' He was not connected with it then; but he came shortly afterward, and I could not leave. There was nothing else open to me, and it was either to remain or see my child starve. You are a woman; you know what that means. Then you came. I knew instantly what his attentions to you meant. I saw the old look in his eyes; I saw the old blindness with which he never failed to win. I would have warned you, but I dared not. My position, my child's life, were at stake, and I dared not sacrifice them, even for you. I

CHAPTER XXX

Ada stood there, staring at her informant in a dull, stupid sort of way, apparently unable to take in the situation in all its details. There was something about Dot Craven's own, suffering face that commanded belief, and yet she felt in those first few moments, when her senses were so benumbed,

had two friends, and I told them of the danger that threatened you. They promised they would save you. The old mania was upon me to-day, and I could bear it no longer. I confess to being a weak fool, but I have told you that I loved him with the only love that comes into a woman's life, and I came down here, to see once again the old place in which I had passed those first days of my only happiness. You know the rest. I met you. I seemed to understand in one moment all that had happened. I knew that I had come too late."

There was another silence between them—a silence more eloquent than any words—broken at length by a long, quivering sigh from Ada.

"No," she said, in an intense undertone; "if what you have said is true, it is not too late. If that ceremony was a lie, then I am saved in time, and I shall thank you from the depths of my soul. But how are you to prove it? You would not accept the word of the woman who came to you, how can you expect me to take yours? John Clarke has been to me all that is good, true, and manly. He has been my friend when no woman stood more sadly in need of one. Do you think I can listen to the first syllable of scandal, that is spoken against him, and not doubt? I confess that your expression, your earnestness, carry some conviction, and yet I must have the strongest proof before I can accept your word against his. If what you have said be true, come with me to that house; let us together face the woman who lives there, and hear what she will have to say. Will you come?"

There was a slight hesitation, a slight shrinking from the ordeal through which she knew that she must pass; then Dot lifted her head bravely.

"Yes," she answered, "I will go."

Neither of them spoke after that, but walked swiftly along the country road, over which Ada had so recently passed. Her countenance was set and grim. The eyes contained a steely sort of glare, but she was trying to convince herself that the woman had lied; that, out of jealousy or pique, she had come with this tale, and yet something in Dot Craven's manner convinced her, against her will, that it was not a lie.

She even quickened her step, rapid as it had been before, when they came in sight of the house, and her breath was coming thickly, almost gaspingly, as she paused before the door.

It was opened with suspicious promptitude from the inside, and the woman whom she had seen but for an instant on her arrival, stood before them.

She started slightly, and changed colour when she recognised the visitor, whom she had not expected, an act which was not lost upon Ada's sharpened senses; but it was only a momentary weakness.

"Won't you come in?" she asked, striving to force her voice into calmness, but not succeeding altogether. "I hope you have enjoyed your walk?"

"We are not coming in, Mrs. Norton," answered Dot, stepping forward and assuming the lead in the conversation. "I have come down to take this young lady away with me. If I can prevent it, she shall never enter that door again. Mrs. Norton, you are a woman. I appeal to you in the name of your sex, and in the name of that little grave that you shovelled me when I was here as your guest with the man whom I believed to be my husband, to tell this young lady what a scoundrel John Clarke is! In the name of your womanhood, save her from this hideous affliction that will fall into her life if you and I do nothing to rescue

her. Speak! And by the memory of your dead child, speak the truth."

The woman grew red and then white. A thousand emotions seemed to pass over her in that brief instant, and then the ruling passion of her life came to the surface—the love of gold.

Ada seemed to read every change as she would have done the pages of an open book, but she was silently regarding her as Mrs. Norton answered:

"I don't know what you are talking about. I never saw you before in my life. I know nothing of the gentleman to whom you refer, other than that he came here to engage board for himself and wife."

For a little while Dot stood aghast. She shrank back as if she had received a stinging blow, then her face coloured painfully.

"How dare you tell such a wicked falsehood as that?" she cried, passionately. "It was to you that he brought me in those old days when I was young and innocent and trusted him. You knew him then, but you spoke no word of warning to me. You let me go on to my destruction, and I might have known how it would be now. But I hoped that your womanhood would be more alive. I hoped that the knowledge of my bitterly wrecked life would make you have pity upon her. I hoped you would help me to save her. But I will save her without you. If the whole world must know the secret that I have preserved all these years—the secret of my shame—I will prove to her what a scoundrel this man is. She shall not suffer the torture that I have endured—I swear it!"

She turned swiftly, and caught Ada's hand pleadingly.

"I will bring the proof," she said, eagerly. "Swear to me that he shall be nothing to you until my return. I don't ask you to trust my unsupported word, but promise me that you will wait until to-morrow."

Ada lifted the hand to her lips.

"I believe you," she exclaimed, with evident emotion. "I could read the lie in that wretched woman's face. I beg of you that you will not leave me here alone. If you go, take me with you."

And with a cry of gladness, Dot flung her arms about Miss Gray's neck.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Neither realising nor understanding why that consuming fear should be upon her, but yielding fully to her terrible presentiment that all was not well, Jane sped along upon her errand.

She knew perfectly well that Ada would have died before consenting to what she intended doing, but she felt that Arthur Clinton was the only one who could help her in her trouble, and it was to him that she was going.

She had formed some vague idea that she would entreat him not to tell her mistress what she had done, in the event of her fears being unfounded, or of his being unable to assist her; but she was thinking very little of that as she hurried along. It seemed to her that the distance was never-ending that lay between Ada's little home and Clinton's, but it was covered at last, and, scarcely able to mount the steps, she nevertheless pulled the bell with considerable vigour.

Arthur was standing there with the letter still in his hand—the letter he had written to Oscar Gray.

He started violently when he saw who it was who stood there, and, springing forward, caught her arm.

"For Heaven's sake, what has happened?" he cried, hoarsely.

The question, the sudden answering of her summons, and finding herself facing him where

she did not expect it, destroyed what trifling remnant of self-control Jane possessed. She saw no one beyond him, but in a trembling voice, that was scarcely audible under her excitement, she replied:

"Come quickly, for the love of Heaven! I don't know what has happened, but I fear the worst."

"Ada—"

"Is married to that man."

"Clarke?"

"Yes."

"Good Heaven!"

He staggered against the door, but she caught his arm in her firm grasp and upheld him, under the excitement that was almost consuming her.

"I don't know what it is," she cried, swiftly, fiercely; "but there is something wrong. You were the only one I knew to whom I could apply, and I came at once. I knew nothing of it until the thing was done; then I felt that it was some horrible plot against her. I don't understand it, but—"

"Plot? It is the most infernal scheme that a devil ever devised! Come quickly! There is not a moment to lose."

He seized his hat from the rack, dashed out of the door, and, hastily followed by Jane, was off.

At the corner of the street he found a cab with a fairly respectable horse. He obtained the address from Jane, and giving it to the cabman, with the promise of a quadrupled fee if he would not spare his horse, they started for Ada's residence.

The rattling of the vehicle over the cobblestones made conversation almost impossible. There was one question and answer, however, that filled Jane with the wildest horror.

"What does it all mean?" she had asked, breathlessly.

"It means that that infernal scoundrel is married already, and that she is no more his wife than you are!"

Jane did not reply—she could not. She was thinking Heaven with all her heart for the presentiment sent her, and that she had been wise enough to act upon it; and yet she was scarcely conscious of the feeling. She felt that Clinton would save her mistress, and that was enough; yet still she could not quiet that awful fear at her heart.

They drove on in silence after that until they came to the address that she had indicated, when the cab stopped.

Arthur did not stop to pay the man, but bidding him wait, he followed Jane up the steps. She opened the door with her latch-key, and almost side by side they sprang up the stairs. She did not pause to knock upon the door, but threw it open as she would never have dared do upon other occasions.

The room was empty.

With an expression of consternation, she turned and looked at Arthur. Neither of them spoke.

She sprang quickly to the door of the other room and tore it open.

It likewise was empty.

He was already beside her, and saw with a feeling of horror that Ada was not there.

"What does it mean," he gasped, hoarsely. She shook her head, utterly unable to force her voice into a reply. But her brain was active enough. She ran to the door of the sitting-room and hastily threw it open.

A maid was descending the stairs.

"Annie!" she cried out, so hoarsely that no one would ever have recognised her voice as anything human, "have you seen Miss Gray?"

"Yes," answered the girl. "She left here only a few moments ago with a gentleman. They went for a drive. Why, what has happened?"

Jane made no reply. She was back again beside Clinton almost before the girl had finished speaking.

"Good Heaven! Don't you understand it?" she cried, wildly. "He knew that I suspected him. He saw me leave the house, and he has taken her away at once. What shall we do?"

"Find him!" exclaimed Arthur, with fierce determination. "Find him, if we must search to the ends of the earth. And then, if he has harmed her, I will cut the heart out of his body as I would that of a rabid cur. You stay here. There is nothing that you can do, and if they should return, I want you to notify me at once. Send any message to care of James Flint, editor of 'The Mercury,' and don't allow her to be for a moment alone with him, if you must, summon an officer to compel obedience. You understand me?"

"I do."

There was no need for further words. He was off almost before he had received her reply. The carriage was still at the door. He gave his hurried, almost incoherent order to the driver, sprang inside, and closed the door.

He had completely forgotten Winifred as if she had never existed. He sat there staring from the open window of the carriage, yet seeing nothing of the throng that surrounded him. He seemed dazed, bewildered, and yet, in an undefined way, he knew what he designed to do.

To seek the aid of the police would be but to advertise the horrible position in which Ada had placed herself, to create a scandal, which, even in his unreasoning state, he was most anxious to avoid for her sake. But he had determined that he would do that if all else failed. He was not conscious of thinking or planning, and yet what he intended to do seemed to come to him involuntarily.

He started somewhat when the cab stopped before "The Mercury" office, but he did not lose a moment. He sprang out and got into an elevator as soon as the distance could be covered. He went at once to the reporters' room, and was fortunate enough to see Ned Brunton sitting at a distant desk.

He crossed the room swiftly, and placed his hand heavily upon the young man's shoulder.

"Do you know that we have let that infernal scoundrel attain his end?" he asked, in a voice that arose scarcely above a whisper.

"What do you mean?"

"That what we—what Dot feared has come to pass, and none of us has done anything to prevent it."

"Not—"

"That Clarke has married Ada—Miss Gray."

"Good—"

"There is no time for ejaculations," interrupted Arthur. "He has taken her away."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"But how?"

"From the house in a carriage."

"By Jove! I'll bet I can see it all. He is to start for Italy on Wednesday. There is no steamer to day, so that it would be impossible for him to have taken an immediate one. I'll stake my life he has taken her to the old place over in the country."

"You mean the same place to which he took Dot?"

"Yes."

"Do you know how to go there, and where it is?"

"Yes."

"Then there is not a moment to lose. Let us be off at once."

He left a hasty message for James Flint, explaining something of the situation to him, while Ned went to secure a fresh pair

of horses, and in less than ten minutes they were off.

There was little talking done between them, none, in fact, until they had left town behind them; then Ned turned to his old friend.

"What shall you do if we find them?" he asked.

"Kill him, if he has harmed her," answered Arthur, grimly.

Another silence fell. The road was deserted. The country never looked more still, more utterly dismal. They were both thinking deeply, when the sound of other hoof-strokes reached them.

Ned looked out the window. A carriage was passing them. He glanced into it, and a low cry fell from his lips.

"Good Heaven!" he gasped. "It is Clarke! We must catch him!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

Arthur Clinton's brain seemed to fire under Ned Brunton's words. For one moment his head reeled, and a darkness came before his vision that threatened unconsciousness, but he quickly threw it off, and almost before the sound of his friends' voice had ceased, he had thrown the door of the cab open and sprung to the ground.

The tired horses connected with the other carriage were not going rapidly, and under the intense stillness of the country, the driver distinctly heard the cry to him to stop.

He had been given no instructions not to do so by his employer, and believing the man who called to him to have some business he immediately pulled up.

Clinton and Brunton gave no time for an order to be given from the inside, but ran swiftly, hastily traversing the ground over which the tired horses had passed.

Clarke, thinking that something had happened to the carriage or horses, and intensely annoyed that it should have occurred just at that time, opened the door and looked out. He had barely done so when Clinton was beside him.

He muttered a low oath, and would have closed the door again, but it was held firmly, whilst Clinton seized him with his disengaged hand and almost snatched him from the carriage. The three men stood there facing each other, breathless, fiercely indignant.

Clarke seemed almost choking with rage. There was no one to whom he could apply for assistance. They were on an unfrequented road, and there were no police at hand to whom he could apply for protection.

"By what right have you stopped my carriage?" he demanded, his voice hoarse with anger.

His own fury had rather calmed Clinton, therefore he was able to reply in a tone as steady as was the one he ordinarily used.

"Where is Miss Gray? What have you done with her?"

"I have not seen her since I had the pleasure of meeting you last."

"That is a lie!"

Clarke's face grew almost black with rage. For a moment it seemed to Clinton that the city editor of the "Mercury" was about to strike him, and he would have offered any provocation to have had him do so, for that would have given him an excuse to kill the false hearted villain; but Clarke controlled himself in time, and replied, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders:

"I ought to knock you down, but I cannot do that to a creature like you. Stand out of my way!"

"You shall never enter that carriage again until you have told me the exact whereabouts of Miss Gray. I know the atrocious fraud you have put upon her. I ought to kill you where you stand, but there is a better punishment in store for you, and I will spare you for it. Speak, and quickly! Where is Miss Gray?"

"I have told you I don't know!"

"And again I say, you lie! I think my friend here knows of her whereabouts as well as you can tell either of us, but it is not my purpose to allow you to escape. I am going to force you to enter that carriage with us and return to the place where you have taken others of your victims. It is my belief that she is there; but if it proves to be not true, then I shall force you to tell me where you have concealed her, or I shall kill you!"

Clarke was rapidly casting his eye over the situation. He knew that if any such suggestion as his having another wife should be made to Ada, she would never rest until she had ascertained the truth. He was already wildly repenting the foolish freak that had made him abandon his purpose of taking her with him at once; but how was he to foresee a situation like this? He scarcely knew what to reply. He perfectly realized that for him to re-enter that carriage and drive back to the farm-house, would be tacitly to abandon everything—to give Ada up. And that he had determined he would do only with his life.

"You are talking like a madman!" he exclaimed, his brow drawing to a straight line and his lips compressing angrily. "I have already told you that I know nothing of the lady whose name you have chosen to connect with mine."

"Then, if that be true, come with us to the house that this gentleman shall mention to your driver."

"I shall do nothing of the kind!"

"You refuse?"

"Emphatically."

"Then I shall force you to do it."

"You will find that two can play at that game. If you dare to lay a hand upon me, I will shoot you as I would a dog!"

As he spoke he slipped his hand behind him, and before Clinton realized what he was about to do, the barrel of a revolver flashed before his eyes. He was not in the least startled, because he had faced them before; but it was Ada he wanted, and not a fight.

Furthermore, he was not armed, and he knew perfectly well that if he should be disabled in any way, Ada's chances of escape would be very small.

He hesitated for a moment, while a contemptuous smile filled the eyes of his opponent; but there was a suggestion from another quarter that rather changed the aspect of things.

While the two antagonists were looking at each other and apparently measuring the strength each of the other, a hoarse voice reached Clarke from his right:

"Drop that pistol, or by Heaven I'll put a ball straight through your infernal head!"

He turned his eyes in the direction of the voice, and saw Ned Brunton standing there as close as he could well get to him, with the muzzle of a revolver almost touching his temple. He could feel the pressure of the cold steel, and a man never realises his danger so much as at a moment like that.

The second his eyes roved from Clinton's, the latter sprang upon him, and with a quick wrench wrung the pistol from his hand.

"Now, curse you!" Arthur cried, heavily, "perhaps you will refuse no longer. Are you ready to come with us quietly, or shall we be compelled to use force?"

(To be continued.)

FORTUNES OF DAMARIS.

—10:—

(Continued from page 128.)

"My darling, good-bye. Do not think I shall do anything rash; I am only going to the one who—perhaps—is all I have left to love me. I hope you will soon forget me, and love some good girl whose name is stainless as your own. Once you said that you would marry 'no woman whose ancestors could not show a clean slate.' Ah! my dear one, how little you thought then, that in those words you pronounced my doom. Good-bye, and Heaven bless you.—D.V."

That was all; not a hint as to where he might find her—not the least hope held out of their future meeting. She was lost to him, and through no fault of his own. The well-trained servant could hardly repress an exclamation as he looked at his master's changed and haggard face.

"Drive to Leonard and Leonard's," he said, quickly; "make all possible haste."

He knew that the Leonard's were Sir Armitage Vyse's solicitors, and he hoped to gather tidings of Damaris from them.

The senior partner met him courteously, and, having heard his errand, said:

"I beg pardon, but may I ask, have you the right to be apprised of the young lady's movements?"

"The best of rights; we were only waiting for Sir Armitage's return to consummate our union. I did not know she had left Slowcum until this afternoon."

"You are lucky to find the office open at such a late hour; press of work has kept one here. I am glad now that it was so, because you could not have reached my residence to-night. Miss Vyse called upon us yesterday; she seemed very much distressed, and said that circumstances compelled her to go out at once to Sir Armitage, and begged us to supply her with the necessary funds. This, of course, we did, but when I proposed that I should go down and interview her guardian, she resolutely refused her consent, saying: 'No good can result from such an action, and I will never return to Slowcum; my father would not wish it.' We saw it was useless to combat with her resolution, and so begged her to remain with Mrs. Leonard until she sailed; this she promised to do; but, as she never returned, we concluded she had changed her mind; or that she had secured a berth in an early vessel, and had probably taken up her residence at Maurice's Hotel—where Sir Armitage has been accustomed to stay when in town—not wishing to listen to our remonstrances."

"And you made no inquiries?" asked Jocelyn, indignantly.

"No; we saw no reason to do so. Miss Vyse seemed eminently capable of caring for herself, and she would probably resent any interference on our part. Then, too, it seemed extremely likely, that when her grievance had grown less with passing hours, she would repent her hasty conduct and return to Mrs. Redgrave."

"No!" said Jocelyn, heavily, "she would die first. It was at Slowcum she heard her mother's story, and grew desperate. Great Heaven! perhaps in her shame and pain she has taken her life! You do not know her as I do—how sensitive she is; what a bitter grief it is to her to feel there is a blot upon her name."

"You have heard a garbled version of the story. Lady Vyse was as pure as an angel, and her husband is a miserable man to-day because he wronged her years ago by his foul suspicions. I suppose, like her daughter, she was ultra-sensitive, and she was a proud

woman too. She knew he contemplated a divorce, and so she fled. It was thought, at first, she had a partner in her flight, but that was proved a false surmise, and her innocence was established beyond a doubt. But from the day on which she left her home until now, no trace of her has been found. It is supposed she died long ago, because all inquiries for her have been fruitless."

Jocelyn had ample food for reflection as he went home. Oh! that he could find his darling, and comfort her with the assurance of her mother's innocence, and his own undying love. One thing he did before retiring to rest; he wrote to Mrs. Redgrave, giving her a brief account of his interview with the solicitor, and ending with severe comments upon her own unchristian conduct. Neither did he spare Rachel nor Duncan, and the latter worthy felt uncomfortable and altogether despicable when Leah gave him a full and particular repetition of Jocelyn's remarks.

In the morning Jocelyn had risen very early and gone from one shipping office to another, but no one answering to his fiancée's description had taken passage to Madras. She was alone in London! Gently nurtured, sensitive Damaris; ignorant of the perils which beset her, ignorant of the ways of her own countrymen. In that sheltered school in Provence, little news of the outer world had reached the fair students; their experience of life was nil. The young man, remembering these things, was almost frantic. Damaris, with her frank and simple nature, would prove such an easy prey for any adventurer, and as the long days dragged by, hope died in his heart. If she were alive, surely some of those he employed to track her would bring him news of his lost darling. Was it possible, that in the first anguish of despair and shame she had done herself to death? Did the muddy waters of the unquiet Thames enshrine her sweet body in their cruel depths? No! no! he dared not think that. He could not picture the exquisite face grown rigid in death, the dark eyes staring horribly, the beautiful hair all heavy and dank about the slender throat. Heaven was more merciful than man, and surely Heaven had his darling safe in its keeping.

And all the while the vain search was going on Damaris was safe in the House of Charity—safe, but only just alive. When she left Mr. Leonard, she had gone, as she believed, in the direction of Lloyd's Shipping Office, but had grown bewildered and frightened by the noise and bustle around. And at last, in crossing a road, she lost her head, and in trying to escape from a bus, was knocked down by a cab coming in an opposite direction. She lay stunned and white, with closed eyes, and some one cried that she was dead. A crowd quickly gathered, and a discussion arose as to what should be done with her; a policeman suggested she should be taken to the nearest hospital, but at that moment, another person appeared on the scene. In deference to her dress—she was a Sister of Mercy—the crowd made way for her to pass, and stooping over the prostrate girl she felt her pulse. Then, lifting her beautiful face—beautiful despite its sorrow and its years—she said:

"She is not dead. Will you get me a cab, policeman?—and should her friends inquire for her, you will find her at the House of Charity. I am Sister Marah, the Superior."

No one knew Damaris, no one else felt any inclination to burthen themselves with a stranger, even though that stranger was elegantly dressed, and evidently gently born. So Sister Marah was allowed to carry her protégée away without protest, and in an incredibly short time Damaris lay in a little white bed, in the pleasantest room the rambling old house could afford, and a

doctor was bending over her with an anxious face.

"There are no bones broken," he said, at length, "but she will have a hard fight for her life—it is concussion of the brain. If she has any friends you had best send for them."

But there was nothing on Damaris Vyse to tell who she was, and as she continued unconscious for more than three weeks Sister Marah could learn nothing from her.

One day she spoke reasonably, although in so faint a voice her words were hardly distinguishable:

"I would like to know where I am, and who you are?"

"You are with the Sisters of the House of Charity; they call me Sister Marah."

"Sister Marah! I have heard of you. Who was it spoke your name in the time I am always trying to remember?" and she pressed one thin hand to her white brow, round which little rings of hair clustered, for they had been compelled to cut off all her heavy tresses.

"Do not try to think now, dear child; but rest. When you are stronger you shall tell me all I need to know."

And the girl, obeyed like a weary child, whilst the Superior sat beside her, watching with eyes grown dim with pain and remembrance. Long ago, in the dead past, of which she scarcely dared now to think, she had a child, with just such sweet grey eyes as lit this girl's face; and she had voluntarily resigned her, lest her young life should be shadowed by the reflection of her own imputed crime.

Slowly Damaris came back to life and strength; and as full consciousness of all that had passed came to her, she said:

"I must go—I have written to papa saying when he might expect me. Long ago he must have had my letter, and when I do not reach him he will be frantic, thinking I am lost."

"Dear child, you must be calm. Tell me your name, and where your father may be found?"

"I am Damaris Vyse—Sister Marah, what ails you?" for suddenly the Superior, who had been pouring some medicine into a glass, dropped the bottle with a cry that was almost a shriek, and her face grew awful in its pallor.

"It—it—is nothing," she said. "I—I am only faint—these attacks are not rare."

And she sank to the floor, her hands grasping at her throat, her wild eyes bent hungrily upon Damaris.

"You are more ill than you think; let me ring for help."

"No, no; it is passing, and I was foolish to startle you; and—and I have spilt all your medicine."

"Oh, never mind the medicine, it is not so pleasant that I regret its loss," said Damaris, with the ghost of her former smile.

Suddenly Sister Marah rose, and crossing to her, stooped and kissed her with a passionate yearning; then, under her breath, she said:

"Will you tell me your story, Damaris? If I am to help you I must know all that went before your accident."

CHAPTER VII.

Damaris told all the sorrowful tale, and Sister Marah, listening with bated breath and averted face, sat silent and immovable as a statue. The girl's heart had opened to her as the flowers open to the sun, and she kept nothing back. She spoke of Jocelyn and his love; of his pride in his stainless name; absolving him of any blame.

"Because, you know," she said, wearily, "once I was as proud as he. And I used to believe that my mother's death was so great a grief to my father that he could not endure to hear her name spoken. Now, perhaps, she is a wanderer, helpless and— and friendless."

"If that were so, and you chanced to find her, what would you do, Damaris?"

"I don't know, but—but I think it would be my duty to cherish her, even if I could not honour and love her. Nothing that she has ever done can make me less her child. But, don't you see, I could not ask Jocelyn to do the same."

"Jocelyn? Is that your lover's dear? And is he called Jocelyn Redgrave?"

Damaris looked at her quickly.

"Do you know him? Ah, now I understand why your name sounded so familiar to me. He spoke of a certain Sister Marah—"

"You see her now. Tell me, dear child, truly and without reserve, accepting me in lieu of your lost mother, do you love Jocelyn with your whole heart, as he deserves to be loved?"

Damaris flushed crimson, as she answered:

"If by dying I could win him happiness, I would gladly die."

"Then nothing shall come between you," said Sister Marah. "Dear child, I knew your mother long ago, when she was a happy young wife, without a cloud upon her sky. She loved Sir Armitage devotedly, she worshipped you, and she was punished for her idolatry. Your father was upright, honourable, generous, and he held her very dear; but there was one grave fault in his character—he was abnormally jealous, and without cause; in time he distrusted his bosom friend, and accused him of stealing away his wife's affection. They quarrelled and parted; but Sir Armitage was not satisfied; he even threatened to plead for a divorce. Lady Vyse was young, hot-tempered, and sensitive; she could not survive so great a disgrace, she would not live to blight her child's life. She fled from home, and in her madness attempted suicide, but was rescued by the Sisters of this very House. She then gave herself wholly up to their guidance, allowing her husband to believe her dead. She was a woman most unjustly accused, most cruelly wronged. She was wholly innocent; I will swear that; Year in and year out she has lived a blameless life, hungering for the sight of her dear ones, the touch of her darling's hand."

The sister's voice shook there, and tears came into her eyes. Damaris impulsively stretched out her hand, crying:

"Take me to her; let me tell her how truly I believe in her innocence, how much I will love her, how I will labour to win happiness for her and my dear, misguided father! Sister Marah, where may I find my mother?"

"My child, my child!" the sister cried, with almost a shriek, "look at me! I am here, oh, my beloved one! Let me hear you call me mother before I die!"

And she sank, weeping wildly, beside the bed. Damaris put out her frail arms with an infinitely loving and pathetic gesture.

"My mother! It seems too good to be true! Come nearer, that I may make sure you are you, and not a dream. Oh, mother, darling mother, how can I atone to you for all your years of misery?"

"Only love me," sobbed Lady Vyse, "and I shall be content. No, not content, whilst my supposed sin shadows all your young life. I will fight my battle with the world for your sake."

But she spoke to deaf ears, for Damaris had fainted.

Jocelyn Redgrave, looking very worn and white, was closeted a long time with Sister Marah, and when she gave him news of his lost darling, he could almost have embraced her. There was a curious change in her, too, which puzzled him. Her beautiful, sensitive face was less melancholy than before, and her voice had the ring of hope in it.

"You shall see Damaris now," she said, when he thought their interview was ended, "that is, when you have heard my final words. Damaris has vowed to marry no man who will not accept her mother for his own. Are you prepared to do this?"

"Yes," he answered, to her surprise, unflinchingly, "I am not only prepared, but proud to receive Lady Vyse, if she can be found. She is an innocent woman foully wronged, and Sir Armitage has never ceased to repent his vile suspicion. Her innocence was established years ago, and the man with whom she was supposed to have fled was found dead on a moor. It was proved that he had been dead at least a week."

The sister burst into tears.

"Say it again!" she cried. "Oh, Jocelyn, for your darling's sake, say it again! It seems too good to be true; I cannot drink it all in at once."

And then she laughed hysterically, whilst he stared at her in amazement.

"You think I am mad, and I well might be with all this blessed weight of happiness so suddenly fallen upon me. Can't you understand, Jocelyn? I am Damaris's mother!"

He was silent a moment; then, stooping, he kissed her still fair face.

"And, for her sake, mine," he said, very gently.

Afterwards she led him to the sick-room; it hurt him cruelly to see how thin and pale his darling had grown, but she laughed at his laments, as she clung with love about him; and then, being weary with excess of joy, she lay back in his arms like a tired child, and, watched over by his love, she fell asleep.

The shadows lengthened in the room. The mother rose, and laid a white, tremulous hand upon the young man's arm.

"Be good to her," she said, "she was never strong as a little one, and sorrow such as mine would slip her life away. Oh, as you love her, never let doubt of her truth enter your paradise to spoil it."

"I would not doubt Damaris and her," he answered, solemnly; and Lady Vyse knew that he was in deadly earnest.

On receipt of the letter, which informed him of his daughter's discomfort, Sir Armitage had begged and obtained leave to return for a brief while to England. He felt convinced that something was seriously wrong, for Damaris was not given to complaining. And when he reached Slowcum he found that she had flown. Then all the shameful story had to be re-told, and a very bad time Mrs. Redgrave and Rachel had. The former wished with all her heart that she had exercised a little more of that charity which she so often preached—and so rarely practised—to Ruth and her daughter. And Duncan had reason to repent his conduct, for the frate baronet sought him out, and gave him the soundest thrashing he had ever received. Then, in response to a letter from Leonard and Leonard, he went to town, and there, after long years, husband and wife were reunited. Over that meeting and reconciliation our reporter is silent.

Shortly after, Jocelyn and Damaris were quietly married, and Sir Armitage returned to India with his wife, now more loved and highly honoured than in the early days of

their marriage. Leah lived with her half-brother until she, too, became a happy wife, and because of her goodness to Damaris she found her dowry largely increased. And Rachel—well, she is now Mrs. Campbell, a miserable, unloved woman, whose petulant complainings weary even her mother's patience.

THE END.

FACETIAE.

"THAT cat made an awful noise in the back garden last night," "Yes, father; I suppose that since he ate the canary he thinks he can sing."

SAID the night watchman when about dusk he was invited to drink a cup of coffee: "No, thank you; coffee keeps me awake all night." Then he saw his blunder, looked very embarrassed, and tried to explain. But it was of no use.

THEY were discussing religious questions. Said Brown: "I tell you that if the other animals do not exist after death, neither does man. There is no difference between a man and a beast." "If anybody could convince me of that, Brown, it would be you," said Jones, demurely.

FIRST TRAMP: "I owe that old couple in that house a grudge, an' I'm goin' ter slip in an' kill one of 'em." SECOND TRAMP: "Why don't ye kill both?" FIRST TRAMP: "One's enough. The neighbours has heard 'em say sharp things to each other most like, an' if I kill one, th' other 'll be hung fer it."

"I HOPE, papa," she said, earnestly, "that you didn't hurt George's feelings when you met him at the door last night. He is very sensitive." "He seemed so." "Did he say anything?" "No, my daughter, he said nothing, but"—and there was an expression of serene satisfaction in the old man's eye—"he was visibly moved."

IT was a college town, and he was a freshman calling on a young lady he had known as a boy. The servant who admitted him asked for his name. "Say an old friend,"—very airily—"Amicus." Bridget said, "Yes, sor," and retired; but in a moment returned to ask, "If you please, sor, fwhat sort of a cuss did yez say that ye wuz?"

Fogg has a happy way of escaping life's drudgery. When he sees Mrs. F. struggling with a heavy coal-hod, he says to himself, "I ought to do that myself;" but then he thinks, "If I do relieve her I shall be puffed with pride because of my thoughtful kindness. Therefore I won't do it." And he doesn't, though, of course, it requires no little self-denial on his part.

MOTHER: "How did you happen to take dinner with Tommy Traddles?" Young heir: "Mrs. Traddles invited me." "Didn't you ask her to?" "No'm." "Did Tommy ask her?" "No'm. He only told her it would be a good thing for her to keep me, 'cause as long as I was there you wouldn't have anybody to send over to borrow things."

IN a New Zealand school, a right angle was drawn upon the blackboard and correctly enough described; but when another was drawn the description was thus given: "A left angle." Perhaps the best reply was upon an historical subject. "What caused the civil war in the reign of Charles the First?" "His leaving tacks" (for levying taxes, probably) "on the seats of the House of Commons." A very good reason for persons rising in indignation.

THE famous painter Fuseli had a great contempt for "chatter." One afternoon a party of friends paid a visit to his studio, and, after a few moments spent in looking at the pictures, they seated themselves and proceeded to indulge in a long and purposeless talk. At last, in one of the slight pauses, Fuseli said, earnestly, "I had pork for dinner to-day." "Why, my dear Mr. Fuseli," exclaimed one of the startled group, "what an extremely odd remark!" "Is it?" said the painter, ingenuously; "why, isn't it as interesting and important as anything that has been said for the last hour?"

SOCIETY.

THE Duchess of Devonshire has been in town a great deal of late, looking very handsome, and dressed in deep mourning.

THE Duke of Sutherland has been made Lord Lieutenant of the county of Sutherland in succession to his father the late Duke.

AN old housekeeper states that the flavour of both tea and coffee is vastly improved by keeping these articles in glass fruit-jars.

NEW YORK is the largest cloak-manufacturing centre in the world, there being about sixty per cent. more cloaks made there than in London.

HIS Holiness the Sovereign Pontiff of Rome has the most valuable tiara of diamonds in the world, the chief ornament in the Pope's triple crown.

THE Dowager Lady Tennyson has left Aldworth and settled at Freshwater, Isle of Wight, for the winter. Lord Tennyson accompanied his mother, and will be joined at Freshwater by his wife.

AT an "opal dinner," given a short time ago by the half owner of an opal mine in Mexico, the exquisitely arranged table was decorated with pale-tinted flowers, fairy lamps, and changeable watered-ribbon, all of the opal tints. The *conveners* were opals in plush cases!

A PERMANENT landing-stage is to be constructed in Portsmouth Harbour for the accommodation of the Queen and the Royal Family, and is to be ready for use when her Majesty proceeds to the Continent towards the end of March. There is to be a structure a hundred feet in length, well-covered, and with several waiting-rooms.

THE health of Prince Alfred is a cause of constant anxiety to his parents. He has always been delicate, and since his dangerous illness at Darmstadt last spring there has been reason to fear that he is suffering from an internal malady of a grave nature. The young Prince is obliged to adopt a strict regimen, and he requires constant medical supervision.

THE Empress Eugenie is attracting a great deal of attention at Bath, where she is naturally a notable figure in the Pump Room. She is still a striking and handsome personality, with her smooth, white hair, erect carriage, and fine features; but there is no longer the smallest pretence of youth, and it is not so difficult as it used to be to believe that she is only eight years younger than the Queen.

THE new church at Otthill is to be erected in close proximity to the present structure, as the Queen wishes it to be surrounded by the existing churchyard, which contains a large monument to John Brown, which her Majesty erected over that deceased domestic's family grave. John Brown is commemorated at Balmoral by a life-size bronze statue by Boehm, which is a very prominent object in the grounds, as it occupies a most conspicuous position on the wooded banks, near the garden-cottage, within a short distance of the Castle.

THE peal of bells presented by an Australian lady to the Imperial Institute in commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee, will be of great interest. They are to be named for the Princess of Wales, the "Alexandra" peal. The tenor will bear the inscription "Victoria R.I. 1837-1887," and the other nine will be called respectively after the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke of Connaught, the late Duke of Clarence and Avondale, the Duke of York, the Duchess of Fife, Princess Victoria, and Princess Maud of Wales. The gift is personal to the Prince of Wales, and a condition is that the peal be rung on the Queen's birthday and accession-day, and on the birthdays of the Prince and Princess of Wales. They will be used for the first time when the Queen opens the Imperial Institute in May next.

LORD and Lady Salisbury will reside at Hatfield during the next few weeks. They will probably spend Christmas at Beaulieu, surrounded by various members of their family.

STATISTICS.

THE largest pyramid in Egypt is 438 ft. high. ONE pound of Indian tea will make 170 cups of strong tea.

AN inch of rain means one hundred tons of water on every acre.

LAST year 3,000,000 books were issued to the people of London from free libraries.

THERE were about two thousand men employed at the Paris Exposition. In Chicago there will be fully eight thousand employed.

STATISTICS show the American to be the greatest traveller. The records of railway trips taken by each nationality give the following proportion: Americans, 27; English, 19; Belgian, 11; French, 5; Turks, Swiss and Italians, 1 each.

GEMS.

BETTER be called a fool for doing right than be a fool in doing wrong.

HOW can we expect a harvest of thought who have not had a seedtime of character?

IF wrinkles must be written upon our brows, let them not be written upon the heart. The spirit should not grow old.

DUTY is a power which rises with us in the morning and goes to rest with us at night. It is coextensive with the action of our intelligence. It is the shadow which cleaves to us, go where we will, and which only leaves us when we leave the light of life.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPICED GRAPE.—Put four pounds of ripe grapes on the fire, in a granite kettle. Mash them until all are broken; add twelve whole cloves, twelve allspice, one inch square of stick cinnamon, and half as much ginger root. Cook until the grapes are perfectly soft, then rub through a sieve; add one pint of vinegar, and sugar to taste. Put on to boil again, and simmer until thick.

SPICE PUDDING.—One teacup of breadcrumbs, one teacup of flour, three tablespoons sugar, two ounces suet, chopped up, one teacup milk, one and half teaspoons mixed spice, one egg, half teaspoon soda. Mix all the dry things in a basin; beat up the egg, add the milk to it, pour it all in and mix well; grease a mould, pour it all in, cover with greased paper; put into a very little water; cover the pot with a close lid, and steam one and half hours.

A PLAIN CABINET PUDDING.—Butter a pudding basin and line the inside with a layer of stoned raisins; then nearly fill the basin with slices of bread and butter, with the crust cut off. In another basin beat six eggs, add to them two pints of milk, sugar to taste, and quarter of an ounce of grated nutmeg; mix all together, and pour the whole on to the bread and butter. Let it stand a quarter of an hour, then tie a floured cloth over it; boil for one hour and a half, and serve with a sweet fruit sauce. The basin must be full before the cloth is tied over.

TO PICKLE BEEF.—One pound salt, one gallon water, quarter pound brown sugar, one ounce saltpetre, half ounce allspice, half ounce pepper. Boil all this together, and then let it get cold; then pour it over your round of beef, and let it remain two or three weeks. Some people prefer to mix the above ingredients dry without the water, and rub them into the beef daily, turning it for the proper time. It is very much approved for keeping a good colour. What probably makes fine beef hard is the boiling of it. Put it in boiling or hot water to boil for about five minutes, and then draw the pot to the side of the fire only to simmer after that. If salted meat is boiled quickly it is surely spoiled.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE are full-grown sheep in Breton, France, that are only about the size of rabbits.

AN insurance company for recompensing the damage done by moths has been formed.

THE temperature of the planet Neptune is estimated to be nine hundred degrees below zero.

EVERY available foot of the field of Waterloo is now under cultivation, mostly devoted to wheat, oats, and rye.

MARRIAGES are not allowed in Bavaria unless the authorities are convinced that the persons wishing to marry have the means to support a wife and family.

THE biggest university in the world is, strange to say, at Cairo, Egypt—a country which is not mentioned at all in the statistics—and it has 11,000 students.

RUBBER heels, to facilitate marching, are to be attached to the shoes worn by French soldiers. Experiments with them have given decided satisfaction.

AN optician warns people against polishing their eyeglasses with a handkerchief of silk. A piece of old cotton or linen is very much better for the glass.

A MEDICAL authority states that the voices of singers and actors can be much better preserved if used in theatres lighted with electricity rather than gas.

IT is not unusual for a green Italian applying for work to seize and kiss the hand of the hoped-for employer. The act comes down from the feudal days, when labourers acknowledged fealty by kissing the master's hand.

A CIGAR contains acetic, formic, butyric, valeric and propionic acids, prussic acid, cresotic, carbonic acid, ammonia, sulphuretted hydrogen, pyridine, viridine, picoline and rubidine, to say nothing of cabazine and burdock acid.

SUPPOSING that you wished to walk through all the streets and lanes and alleys of London, and were able to arrange your trip so that you never traversed the same one twice, you would have to walk ten miles every day for nine years before your journey would be completed.

AMONG the many differences between the alligator and crocodile there is a striking one—the alligator never leaves fresh water, while the crocodile often goes to sea, and in the West Indies has sometimes been found many miles from land, but heading directly for an island, possibly out of sight.

A FIRM of opticians have devised what they call a "Hat Detective Camera," which is craftily constructed with this object. It is provided with a complete apparatus, weighing only two-and-a-half ounces, which can be fitted into a hat, the operation being conducted through the ventilating hole. The moral for those who do not desire to be photographed is—beware of hats with holes in the crown.

INVESTIGATIONS have revealed the fact that the so-called "blood" oranges coming from various districts are artificially coloured; the blood tint being produced by the use of Biebrich's scarlet or rosoline. The *Pharmaceutical Era* says it can be detected by remembering that the genuine blood orange is of the same deep hue throughout, while the adulterated oranges have only the outside coloured, the interior retaining the paler tint of the ordinary orange.

THE English, German, and Dutch languages have each twenty-six letters, but there are languages which have more and several have a less number. The Spanish and Slavonic have each 27, the Arabian has 28, the Persian 32, the Georgian 36, the Armenian 38, the Russian 41, the Old Muscovite 43, the Sanscrit is said to have 50 and the old Ethiopian 202. Of those which have a less number than the English the Greek has 24, the Latin 23, the Chaldean 22; the Hebrew and Syrian have the same number as the Chaldean, the Bengalese has 21, the Burmese 19, and that of the Sandwich Islands 12.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

IOLANTHE.—Lemon-juice will remove freckles.

COLOUR-BLIND.—There is no cure for colour-blindness.

BABY.—A hot bath will sometimes cure the toothache.

POWDER-MONKEY.—Nelson's ship *Victory* is at Portsmouth.

INQUIRER.—The detailed census returns have not yet been issued.

DAN.—We have no knowledge of the inquiry to which you refer.

SUE.—No license is required to keep a servants' registry office.

R. A. S.—The Royal Agricultural Society has not held its show at Lichfield.

JULIUS.—No religious denomination in England is endowed by the State.

WATCHING AND WAITING.—Mooro was never Post Laureate, but he was a true poet for all that.

SWEET SEVENTEEN.—Postage stamps have been used for receipts since June 1, 1881.

FORLORN JENNIE.—The 71st Battalion of Field Artillery is still at Meerut, Bengal.

ACIS.—Registrars in country districts are appointed by the parochial boards.

P. L.—The Midland Railway Company's hotel at St. Pancras, London, is the one alluded to.

BEE.—"Oh for the touch of a vanished hand" is from Tennyson's poem, "Break, break, break."

V. W.—The instrument you refer to is probably one for measuring the velocity of the wind.

PRINCE.—The 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders are at Sabatka, Bengal; 2nd Battalion are at Dublin.

DISCORD.—Half brothers or sisters share equally with brothers or sisters born of the first marriage.

MUFF.—The laying of the Atlantic cable was begun at Valentia, in Ireland, in 1857.

PAULINE.—The drama of the "Lady of Lyons" was written about fifty years ago by the first Lord Lytton.

M. L.—A hawker's license costs £2. It is renewable once a year. Apply to the Inland Revenue Office.

DICK.—The census is taken up in one night throughout Great Britain every ten years. Last on 25th March, 1891.

ARGUMENTATIVE.—Usage authorizes both forms of speech, and everyone can take his choice between the two.

T. O. W.—Tennyson's poem "Crossing the Bar" was set to music by Dr. Bridge, organist at Westminster Abbey.

RAYMOND.—A statute mile is 5,280 feet, or 1,760 yards; a nautical mile is 6,086·7 (or 7·10ths) feet—that is 2,028 yards 2·7·10ths feet.

SYLVIA.—The word "Sicilian" is pronounced as though spelled "Sis-sil-yun." The accent is on the second syllable.

WRATHFUL.—Certainly; the inspector can enter any building, even royal palaces, if there is known or supposed to be infectious disease there.

CHARITY.—Father Damien contracted the leprosy which ultimately killed him by daily contact with the lepers to whom he ministered.

POLLY.—The owners are bound to pay the wages of the seamen up to the date when the vessel was lost, and may be sued if they refuse.

MILLY.—The date of the thanksgiving service in St. Paul's for the recovery of the Prince of Wales was February 27, 1872.

KITTY.—No, no; Canada has its own meridian. Could not possibly make use of Greenwich. Noon at Greenwich is only 7·18 a.m. at Ottawa.

OLD MAN.—According to one authority, Andrea and Nicolo Amati, two brothers, were the first Italians who made violins.

ECONOMY.—Except the mirror is a large or dear one, it is cheaper to buy a new one. We will try to find room for recipe next week.

CARACTACUS.—Don't know what you mean. Files are cut by hand with a special tool, not acid; even machinery does not make them satisfactorily.

LUCHILE.—The three largest organs in this country are those at the Royal Albert Hall, the Crystal Palace, and St. George's Hall, Liverpool.

WEE WIFE.—The word is meerschaum, two German words joined together, meaning sea foam, from the fancied resemblance of the material to solidified foam.

ONE IN DISTRESS.—A young man who gets drunk and uses bad language even "occasionally" is unworthy of your affection. Give him up.

SCIENCE.—Astronomy is regarded as the most ancient of the sciences, and the earliest traces of astronomical science are to be met with among the Chaldeans and Egyptians.

C. W.—You can commute your pension if you go to the Colonies, but we fear you cannot if you go to the States; but your pension paymaster will tell you definitely.

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TITUS.—The substances named are called minerals in their natural state as found in the earth, and metals when prepared for commercial purposes. The values vary from time to time.

FRITZ.—Telegraphers must enter as boys, passing a limited examination, then going to telegraph school to study; many years must pass before they attain to what may properly be described as a "good" situation.

OH, WHAT A MIGHTY FALL.

The programme, she informed me, was a charming one, indeed, From the splendid Wagner overture (which nothing could exceed) To the lovely little scherzo and the minuet for strings. And the latest bit of Dvorak, which made her sigh for wings.

Throughout the Grieg concerto her emotion was intense; It seemed to me at times she held her breath in deep suspense. She raved of opus this and that, of Schubert, Bach and Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikowski and a score whose names I missed.

But when, at last, 'twas over, and I led her down the stair, I noticed that beneath her breath she hummed a little air. It was not on the programme, being commonplace and tuneless, And I wondered at the sudden drop from Bach to "Annie Rooney."

TROUBLE.—Have the soles of the noisy shoes steeped for a night in paraffin oil, sweet oil, or any other cheap oil. This will completely sober them and tame them so that their voices shall no more be raised to disturb you or others.

INQUIRER.—Well, we think if you get a reply from the Board of Trade within three weeks more you may congratulate yourself on having been highly favoured. There is nothing like undignified haste about Government departments.

T. HOLLAND.—If you are fit and healthy there would be little trouble in obtaining work about Melbourne, although just lately there has been considerable trade depression in the town itself. Single men are preferred to married. The climate is much warmer than that of England, and very healthy.

T. T.—A consul is only necessary in a foreign country. The Cape belongs to England. Consequently you no doubt want the address of the Governor, Sir Henry Brougham Loch, C.M.G., Cape Town, South Africa. The Agent-General in London is Sir C. Mills, K.C.M.G., 112, Victoria-street, S.W.

PERPLEXITY.—The "three tailors of Tooley-street," always referred to when some persons are supposed to be magnifying their own importance, dates from a speech by Canning, in which he said that three tailors of Tooley-street petitioned the Commons as "We, the people of England."

MOLLY.—To stew apples. Pare and cut up in rather thick pieces say 1 lb. of apples; put this in a small saucepan, with 1½ table-spoonful of sugar and 1 table-spoonful of water; put on the lid and let them cook till soft, stirring a little to keep from burning. Another way: Cut 1½ lbs. of apples in quarters and pare them neatly; put in a saucepan 1 lb. of sugar and 1 teacupful of water; let it boil; then put in the apples (not on the top of each other if possible), and let them cook with the lid off till soft; they need to be turned over, but they should be kept whole, if possible.

DOT.—The lines—"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all"—are by Friedrich von Logau (1604-1655), in a poem on "Retribution." George Herbert (1833-1833) uses the words "God's mill grinds slow, but sure."

F. W.—If a receipt is granted when the cheque for £2 or more is received it must be stamped; but as matter of fact the cheque is in itself made a receipt by being endorsed with the name of the person who cashes it, and to whom alone it is made payable; the bank holds the cheque in proof of payment.

BRUTUS.—British trains far exceed the United States trains in speed for the simple reason that the British lines are much more solidly built, and stand any amount of wear and tear. The average greatest speed of a train in this country is about 55 miles an hour. Of course there are instances of 80 or 90 miles being accomplished.

EVENING DRESS.—To clean black silk or satin, grate two potatoes into a pail of water or four quarts of water; allow it to settle for an hour or two, and then pour off the clear liquor. With this well brush over your pieces of silk. When they are all brushed lay them in clean spring water, rinse free from the wash, hang up to half dry, then iron on the wrong side.

L. E.—Bullets are cast in moulds. Small shot is made by pouring the melted lead from a great height through small holes for the purpose. You had better not attempt the operation without the proper apparatus. Shot metal is made from 1,000 parts of lead to three parts of arsenic. When the lead is coarse six to eight parts of metallic arsenic are required to fit it for its purpose.

NIWA.—If the feet are tired or painful after long standing, great relief can be had by bathing them in salt water. A handful of salt to a gallon of water is the right proportion. Have the water as hot as can be comfortably borne. Immerse the feet and throw the water over the legs as far as the knees with the hands. When the water becomes too cool rub briskly with a flesh towel.

B. B.—It is almost impossible to give an intelligible or definite answer to your question, but as regards the actual number of ships of first rank in the navies of Britain and France, the following are the approximate figures:—British fleet, 30 first, 16 second, and 6 third class armoured battle ships; 23 first, 48 second, and 54 third class cruisers; French fleet, 14 first, 15 second, and 4 third class armoured battle ships; 12 first, 16 second, and 85 third class cruisers; heavy guns in British battle ships, 580; French, 424; in addition, Britain has 29 torpedo gun vessels, and 85 first class and 75 second class torpedo boats; while France has 19 gun vessels, with 34 first, 104 second, and 41 third class torpedo boats.

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